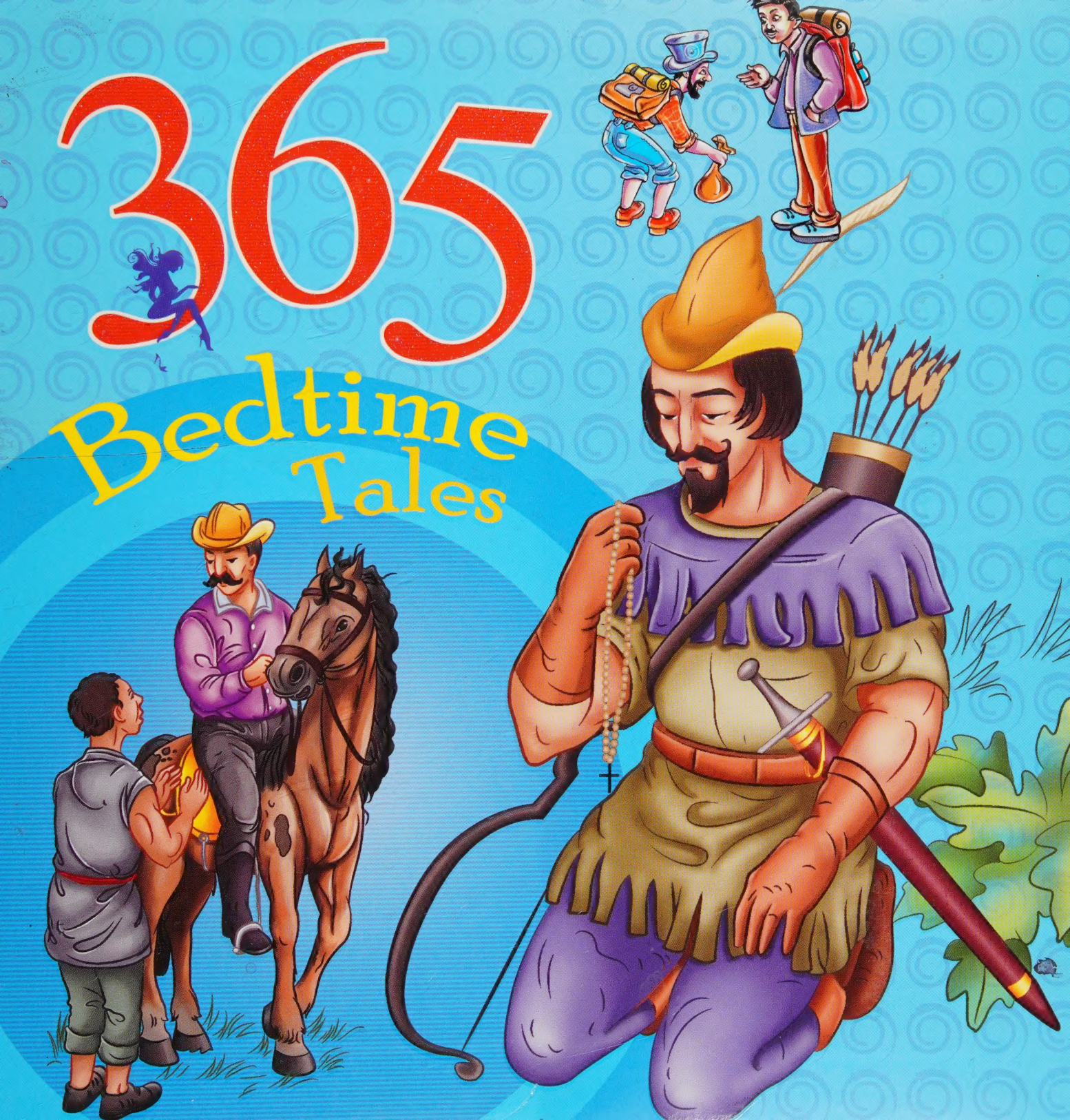
365 Bedtime Tales



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1 The old Woman & the Wine Bottle

An old woman found an empty bottle. As she removed its cork, a puff of fragrance entranced her. She said, "There must have been some prime wine in it which has lately been finished. How nice must that wine be, when it leaves behind the perfume in the very vessel it was contained in!" Several times she placed it greedily to her nose, inhaling and exhaling the lingering scent. And every time, as she did it, she said, "O most delicious!"

2 The Beggar who dreamt

Once lived a poor beggar by the name of Somu. He kept his food in an earthen pot, hung beside his bed. One night, the beggar dreamt that he was no longer a poor man. He was the owner of a popular shop. Soon he became richer than before. He purchased many buffaloes and cows which multiplied in numbers year after year. Soon he built a big house and married a beautiful girl. Children followed. The children played around all day making noise. He then scolded them. But they would not listen. So he picked up a stick and ran after them. The beggar began to move his legs rapidly while he was still asleep. In doing so, he hit the earthen pot which was full of food. The pot broke and the food contents were spilled all over the floor. Somu woke up and saw his precious meal scattered on the ground.

3 The Hunter & the four Friends

Long ago, there lived three friends in a jungle: a deer, a crow, and a rat. One day, a lonely turtle begged to join the group. Although excited, the three expressed their concern on the turtle's security. Suddenly, a hunter appeared. Seeing the danger, the three friends hurried off to a safer place. The turtle tried to crawl away fast but was caught. The hunter tied him up in the net. The three friends decided to help the turtle. The deer ran ahead of the hunter unnoticed and lay on his path as if dead. When the hunter saw the dead deer he became very happy. He put down the turtle on to the ground and ran to the deer. Meanwhile, the rat gnawed through the net and freed the turtle. The turtle hurriedly crawled away into the river. Oblivious of the ploy, the hunter was stunned to find the dead deer sprung up to his feet and fleeing. Dejected, the hunter turned back but was shocked to find the turtle missing. The

hunter got frightened on account of these happenings and ran out of the jungle. The four friends started living happily thereafter.

4 The Sage & his Mouse

Long back, lived a famous sage. In the same forest, a cat attacked on a mouse. The terrified mouse sought refuge in the sage's ashram. The cat trailed the mouse to the ashram and requested the sage to have his prey. Now the sage was in a great dilemma. After much contemplation, he transformed the mouse into a bigger cat. Thrilled, the mouse began to roam about in the forest fearlessly and killed many cats in vengeance. It went on for few days until a fox pounced upon him. The sage once again felt pity for the mouse and transformed him into a bigger fox. The mouse took great pride in his newly acquired status. But, one day, to his horror, a tiger stood before him. Finding himself in grave danger, he as usual ran to take shelter in the ashram of the sage. The sage made the mouse a tiger now. Now the mouse, in the skin of a tiger, roamed confidently in the forest. But the divine powers of the sage always bothered the mouse. He decided to kill the sage. When the sage learnt about the mouse's evil desires, he became very angry. He immediately chanted his powerful hymns and transformed the now tiger mouse back to his original form. The mouse realizing his mistake apologized to the sage and requested him to change him again into a tiger. But the sage drove the mouse away with a stick.

5 The Hunter & the Doves

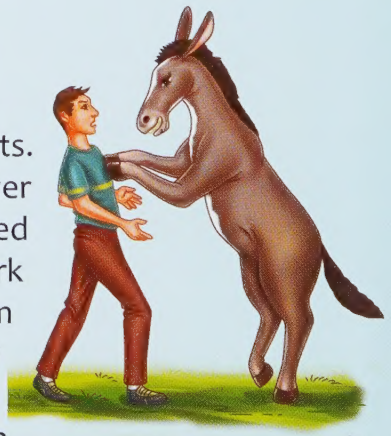
Once, in a huge banyan tree dwelled different types of birds. One day, a fowler came there. He set his net under the tree and strewed some grains of rice over it to lure the birds. Unaware of the trap, a flock of doves came flying. When they saw the grains, they flew down to eat them. The moment they started eating their feet got stuck in the net. The fowler was overjoyed to see the birds. However, the king of doves was very intelligent. He came upon a brilliant idea and advised his friends to clutch the net tight in their beaks and fly above with all strength. The birds obeyed the king and within minutes they were flying high up in the sky along with the net. The fowler was surprised to see this. He ran after the flying birds but failed to catch them. The birds flew off to a safer place. Then the king dove along with his worried friends went to his friend, a

mouse. The mouse got scared when he heard the din outside his hole and came out only when his friend, the king dove, called him. Seeing his old friend entrapped in a net, he immediately started nibbling around the king. The king dove requested him to set his followers free first. Praising the king for his nobleness, the mouse followed suit. With words of gratitude for the mouse, the free doves flew to their destination happily.

6 Prince & the Seedling

Once there lived a king who had a son very ill-mannered. One day, a sage walked into the palace. The king was impressed to see the aura surrounding the man. He honoured the sage with a hermitage at his palace. The king in an evening shared his woes with the sage. The pious man assured him to help the prince mend his wises. Next day, the sage took the prince for a walk in the palace garden. He asked the prince to taste a leaf of a seedling. The leaf was bitter like poison, so the prince just spat it on the ground. Out of anger, he uprooted the tiny plant and tore it to bits. The sage then picked up the mutilated plant and said to the prince, "As you've reacted in the case of this seedling, the people of your father's kingdom may one day react to you in the same way, because they think you are a bad prince. So before it is too late, you must meliorate in order to have others admire you." From that day on, the prince was a changed man—for good.

7 The Dhobi's Donkey



Once lived a dhobi in a village. He had a donkey and a dog as his pets. The dog was very faithful to his master and trailed the dhobi wherever he went. The donkey used to carry the load of clothes. The dhobi loved his dog very much. And the dog, whenever, saw his master, would bark a little and wag his tail. He would raise his front legs and put them on the chest of his master. The dhobi reciprocated the affection by patting the dog lovingly. The donkey envied the dog and decided to act like him to receive his master's affection. And the next day, when the donkey saw his master coming, he ran towards him. He brayed a little and tried to wag his tail. He raised his front legs and put them on his master's chest. The dhobi got frightened to see his donkey's abnormal behaviour. He thought that the donkey might have gone crazy. So he picked up a stick and thrashed him to the ground.

8 The Adventure in the Lift

Sophie and Sam were excited as they were on their way to their cousins' place. Rick and Donna lived by the seaside in a twenty-storey building which was quite dicty. Their apartment was on seventh floor. When Sophie and Sam reached, it was already getting dark and there was no sign of the liftman. After waiting for some time, they decided to go up on their own. They got into the lift. Sam shut the door and pressed the seventh floor button. The lift started moving up. But when it reached the seventh floor, it didn't stop. It continued going up. The children got scared when they saw floor no. 20 on the indicator. And the lift did stop there but to their horror it didn't open. Sam and Sophie began banging the lift doors and shouting frenziedly. Shortly, the lift started moving down. It had more velocity now. Sophie and Sam felt cold with fear. They didn't know what to do. They kept shouting for help. When they reached the ground floor for the fourth time, the liftman was now standing there. He saw the children's scared faces and hurriedly stopped the lift from the outside and opened the door. Sophie and Sam dashed out. They told the liftman what had happened. Though he said that he would take them up, they refused. They preferred to climb the stairs all the way up.

9 Greedy & Jealous

There were two neighbours of which one was greedy and the other was jealous. One day, the greedy neighbour went into the temple of Jupiter and prayed him to grant him what he most desired. Next moment, the jealous neighbour also arrived in. They both gave each other a forced smile and resumed praying. The jealous neighbour also prayed Jupiter to be granted what he most desired. Now Jupiter was well aware of their natures and that they both were each other's neighbours. He decided to punish them. The whole temple resonated with a thunder as he spoke to them, "I will grant you each whatever you wish but on one condition..." "What condition, Lord!" asked both the men asked together. Jupiter continued, "...that your neighbour shall have twice of what you get. Now make your wishes." The greedy one prayed to have a room full of gold, while the jealous one said to Jupiter, "I will ask my wish later. It is now due on you." So they both went back their homes. Now the greedy neighbour screamed in joy as he found one of his rooms filled with gold, but all his joy turned to grief when he learnt that his neighbour had two rooms full of it. There, the jealous neighbour could not bear to think that his neighbour would now be rich and happy. He then asked Jupiter his due wish that he might have one of his own eyes put out because with this, his neighbour would go totally blind.

10 What Time will bring

Wang Chu ran into his house shouting: "Father, Father... our horse has run away! How will we work in the fields now? What a bad luck!" The optimistic father answered, "Calm down, son. It seems bad news but let's see what time brings." The horse returned after a few days accompanied by a beautiful wild mare. The boy's joy doubled. He not only had his horse back but also an additional help. One day, Wang was riding the mare and fell flat on the ground. "What a bad luck! I have broken my leg and won't be able to work till it heals!" "Don't despair, son," said the father. "We will see what time brings." It so happened that the Emperor declared war with the neighbouring kingdoms and patrols of soldiers began visiting the villages to recruit fit and young men into the army. They reached the door of the Chu family. They saw Wang lying on his bed with a leg cast and thus had no option but to leave him in rest. "You see what time has brought us! Even in bad, a goodness is hidden. You only have to wait for the next move of Time. Then we discover the writing of God," said the father.

11 King & the golden Bird

Once lived a magical bird which laid golden eggs. One day, a fowler came to the forest. While hunting, he came near the tree where the magic bird lived. He saw the bird laying golden eggs. He caught the bird and returned home. But he was afraid of keeping the bird because with the bird's golden eggs he would soon become very rich and the king might get suspicious and assume that he had accumulated the wealth through unfair means. So it was better that he himself presented the magical bird to the king. The king was very happy to have such a magical bird. He ordered his servants to take good care of the bird. But the attendants said to the king, "Your Majesty, this is all a hoax. How can a bird lay golden eggs?" This created doubts in the mind of the king. He ordered his attendants to release the bird in the woods.The bird was freed. It flew in the sky and thought, "This seems to be a kingdom of fools. The fowler knew that I laid golden eggs but he gifted me to the king. The king in turn gave me to the attendants to release me in the woods. And the biggest fool of them was me, who landed into the fowler's net."

12 King & the Parrots

Once, a village head got hold of two parrots in his net. But on his way to home, one of the parrots escaped from the net and flew away. He brought the other parrot home and taught it to speak like him. Soon the parrot learnt to talk like a man. The other parrot which had managed to escape was caught by a sage. The sage liked the parrot and taught him to recite holy hymns. The sage lived at one end of the jungle, while the village head lived at the other end. One day, a king of a nearby place came in the jungle riding on his horse. When he neared the village head's house, the parrot shouted from inside the cage hanging outside the house, "Here comes someone. Catch this fellow and beat him thoroughly." The king, hearing the parrot speak in such a filthy manner, left that place and reached the other end of the jungle where the sage lived. Here, the other parrot was also in a cage outside the cottage. When the parrot saw the king approaching, it called out his master, "Guruji, here comes a guest on his horseback. Take him in and offer him a seat. Serve him food, please." The king was highly impressed with the respectful and intelligent talking parrot. He was quick to understand that a good environment always yields a better result.

13 The useful Thief

Once in a town, there lived a rich trader. He was middle-aged and a widower. After many months of bride hunting, he married a poor young girl. The young girl didn't like the middle-aged trader. She never spoke to him politely. The trader was very unhappy with his wife's behaviour. One night, his wife came rushing to him scared and hugged him. The trader was highly surprised. Just then, he saw a thief standing at the doorway. He was so happy that his wife finally came close to him that he asked the thief to pick anything from his house he pleased. The thoughtful thief was so moved to see all that he said, "Sir! There is nothing valuable in this house that I can take with me. But, if in the future your wife doesn't treat you affectionately, I'll surely come here again." And from that day onwards, the trader's wife treated her husband very lovingly.

14 Vishal the virtuous & Vinil the vicious

Vishal and Vinil were friends. One day, Vinil went to Vishal and suggested him to look for better opportunities in other parts of the country. Vishal liked the idea and together they set out for a new town. After earning a lot of money, both friends decided to return home. On the way, a devilish idea struck Vinil and he convinced his friend to bury the wealth in a pit and carry only a nominal amount along. The plan was carried out near a tree. One dark night, Vinil stole away all the money. Next day, he went to Vishal and asked him to take out the wealth from the hidden place. The two went to the spot, dug up the pit, and discovered it empty. They began to blame each other and at last, took the matter to the court. There, Vinil convinced the judge to keep the next sitting at the place of the crime and consider the voice of the tree under which they had buried the money. In the meantime, Vinil included his old father in his treacherous plan. On the given day, when the judge inquired the tree, there came a voice from inside the tree, "Vishal is the thief. He has stolen the wealth." But clever Vishal put a heap of dry leaves and grass around the tree and lighted it. Soon big flames erupted. After some time, Vinil's father jumped out of the hollow of the tree yelling for help. He was hiding in the tree all this while to save his son. The judge understood the whole story and expelled Vinil and his family from the village.

15 Annie's Birthday

It was Annie's birthday, but no one seemed to remember. Mum asked her to get ready for Grandma's house. Annie got ready sadly. As she walked into Grandma's house, she saw the living hall decorated with balloons and streamers. And there lay on a table many presents for her, all beautifully wrapped up. Annie could not believe her eyes! Everyone then sang, "HAPPY BIRTHDAY to you..." Of all the gifts, Annie liked the teddy bear from Dad the best. Before leaving for school, she would put it on the window sill so that she could see it first thing once she got back home. She would hold it tight and tell it all that happened in the school that day. One day, Annie came home and found that her teddy was missing from the window sill! She ran to Mum shouting, "Where is my teddy bear?" Both mother and daughter looked for it in every nook and corner of the house but didn't find it. Annie was down with sadness. She missed her teddy so much. When Dad returned from work in the evening, Annie ran to him crying that

teddy was lost. "Don't cry, my doll. I will get you another one." So Dad right away took Annie to the same toy shop and bought her a new teddy bear exactly like her old one. Annie was again a happy girl!

16 Golu and Molu & the Bear

Golu and Molu were best friends. Golu was lean and active, whereas Molu was fat and lazy. Everyone swore by their friendship. One day, a common friend from a neighbouring village invited them to his sister's marriage. In the route to the wedding venue, a forest fell which Golu and Molu had to cross. In the forest, they saw a bear approaching them. The two were frightened. Golu being light footed could scramble up a nearest tree. Poor Molu being fat was slow. But he showed his presence of mind. He knew that a bear didn't eat dead bodies, so he lay down still on the ground feigning to be dead. The bear came near Molu growling. He sniffed all over him. Taking Molu to be dead, the bear went away. When the bear was far from the sight, Golu came down the tree. He went to Molu and asked him what the bear was telling him in his ear. Saddened by his best friend's act of leaving him alone in danger, Molu angrily replied, "He said to me, 'Don't trust Golu. That who deserts you in trouble can't not be your friend.'" Golu was extremely ashamed of himself.

17 Beautiful might be harmful

It was Cathy's father's birthday. He was very fond of mushrooms. So her mother sent her to the woods to bring some mushrooms to make on her father's birthday. When Cathy returned, she presented her mushroom-ful basket to the mother and said, "Look, Mum, I have brought red & purple mushrooms! Just look at the pearl-like dots on them! You always bring those brown, ugly mushrooms..." "O you silly child, these bright-coloured mushrooms are poisonous! They may look attractive but they can't be eaten. Those brown mushrooms may look ugly but they are the best of their kind," chided the mother. Cathy was very sorry. Her mother explained to her, "Sweetheart, the same is with life. Never be deceived by the appearance but trust only the character."

18 I won't eat it

Millie's mum was very upset with her daughter's fussy behavior towards food. Everyday she had to create a scene over the table. Today it was because of the eggplant. "You know I hate eggplant! I WON'T EAT IT!" "Okay, leave it. But you can eat the rest, at least," Mum said in a tired tone. After lunch, she grabbed her car keys and went out. Millie ran after as she too wanted to come along. Mum was having a new house built for them. She was going to the construction site to oversee. The car stopped at the site. Millie jumped out and ran inside. Mum got busy in discussions with the contractor. As Millie walked around watching the workers, she saw a family of workers sitting in a corner having their break-time meal. They all ate dry bread with water happily and said nothing. Seeing them, Millie was ashamed of herself for she had just discarded plateful eggplants. She went away quietly. That night, over dinner table, fish was served. Mum knew Millie didn't like it much. "Make an omelette for Millie," Mum ordered the cook. "No, Mum. I will eat fish. In fact, I will eat everything from now on because there are those also who have to sleep empty stomach," said Millie. Speechless with wonder, Mum hugged her.

19 Becky's Christmas

Becky sat all alone by the kitchen fire while the farmer and his family, with whom she lived, had gone out to celebrate Xmas. She was only twelve years old and had no family of her own—no one had given her a present or even a hug. In her loneliness, she wished for a fairy godmother who would give her pretty things just as it happened in fairy tales. Now Becky fell asleep and in her dream, or perhaps in real, heard a voice. She looked around, just to see no one. The voice asked her what she wanted the most. "To be loved by everybody!" Becky said immediately. "Good!" said the voice. "And for that you must learn to make people love you by loving them." Meanwhile, the farmer and his family were on their way back from the party. They wondered what Becky would have been up to and whether she deserved a gift or not. On reaching home, they found poor Becky lying on the bare kitchen-floor with her cat in her arms. The fire was burning brightly, the kettle whistling, and from the arrow upon the hearth hung everyone's slippers. From the chair swung the children's nightgowns—nice and warm. "How thoughtful!" the farmer's wife exclaimed as she bent to kiss Becky's cheek. The farmer lovingly stroked the little head. The unusual touch made Becky get up and she clapped her hands with joy as the children showed her their gifts. "My dream has come true!" she laughed happily.

20 Forgetful Danny

Danny was a good child of seven years. He went to school every day and completed his homework on time. He ate on time and went to bed on time. In the evening, he went to the park to play with his friends. But he had a weakness. He would get distracted easily and forget things, which often put him into trouble. One day his grandmother visited to stay for some days. Danny was happy. Granny always cooked all his favourite dishes and told him lots of stories at bedtime. She was a heart patient and needed to have a particular medicine every night. One day, Granny saw that her medicine bottle went empty. She told Danny's father to buy a new bottle on his way home from work. That evening, Danny's father gave the medicine bottle to Danny to place it on Granny's bedside table. Danny was about to when he stopped when hearing voices outside. His friends were calling him out to play football. Danny joined them and forgot all about the medicine. That night, a din woke Danny up. It was that of his parents and a doctor. "I'm afraid she is quite ill." Danny was shocked. "Oh my God! The medicine! I forgot to give it to Granny!" He took the medicine and rushed to Granny's room. "Danny, didn't you give this to Granny?" asked the angry father in surprise. "No, Father, I ...I ... ," Danny hung his head in shame. Granny took the medicine and went to sleep. In the morning, the doctor paid Granny a visit. After checking her, he declared her out of danger. Everyone sighed in relief. Danny sat beside Granny and holding her hand promised that from then on, he would become responsible and would not forget things.

21 Hasty Reward

Mullah Naseeruddin and his friend were returning from somewhere. They came at a stream which had to be crossed by a bridge. But the bridge was very old, narrow and muddy. Mullah somehow managed to cross it but his friend couldn't. He fell by the edge. Mullah immediately offered help by letting him grasp his hand to come out. His friend felt obliged and promised to give him twenty dinars for saving his life. Mullah said, "Thank you" and let him go into the water. The man somehow came out of the water and frowned at Mullah- "Why did you do that?" Mullah replied, "To take my reward of twenty dinars." The man shouted, "Could you not have first waited for me to come out of the water safely?" To this Mullah added, "And could you not have waited to promise me reward after you had come out of the water and stood on the ground?"

22 The 51st Dragon

The instructors of the Killing Dragons Knight School had given up on Gawaine for his lack of spirit. But the headmaster would not let him go like a looser. So, he decided to train Gawaine in slaying dragons. He made the boy learn both theoretically and practically. Finally, it was time for Gawaine to graduate from the dummy dragons to the real ones. The headmaster gave him a magic word to aid him in winning. Armed with his weapon and the word, Gawaine slew 49 dragons. When it came to the 50th one, Gawaine forgot the magic word. All afraid, he still managed to kill the dragon. On asking the headmaster how he could kill the dragon even after forgetting the magic word, the headmaster told him that the word was not really magical but just a confidence-builder. Gawaine was deeply hurt because his master whom he trusted the most risked his life by a lie. Gawaine became even worse than what he was earlier—a spiritless lad. The headmaster however pushed Gawaine into fighting the 51st dragon (which was quite small) but Gawaine never returned from that fight.

23 The Flea & the Wrestler

A flea settled upon the bare foot of a wrestler and bit him. The wrestler screamed out in pain and called loudly upon Hercules for help. The flea now jumped upon the other foot of the wrestler and bit that too. Even by then, Hercules had not come. The helpless wrestler, extremely angry at the yet absent Hercules, groaned- "O you Hercules the Strongest! If you will not help me against a tiny flea, how can I hope that you will assist me against greater antagonists?"

24 The Boy & the Nettle

A nettle stung a boy. Wounded and crying, he ran home and told his mother, "Despite I touched it gently, it stung me so bad." His mother said, "That is exactly why it stung you." "You must behave as per other's disposition. Now next time you touch it, grasp it boldly, and it will be soft as silk to your hand and will not hurt you even the least." "Remember, whatever you do, do with all your might."

25 Bulger's Friend

When Bulger, a strange old man known to be a crazy miser, joined the Salvation Army, the whole town was amused. He disliked people and worked at odd jobs. He was given the position of the bass drummer and never before had a bass drum been so soundly whacked! The leader of the Salvation Army had dealt with many an odd character and studied Bulger's behaviour for a while. One day, he asked him if all was well with him. Bulger replied in the negative and asked if God accepted people who came in late. He did not pray because he did not have any family or friends except one. And it was that one friend who had driven him to ruin. The leader advised him to get rid of the friend who stood between him and God. But Bulger replied that he could not. Christmas was at hand and there was no money for the 'Christamas Tree' for the children who stayed in the hall. The leader was greatly troubled but finally announced that there was to be no tree! Some of the children sobbed and Bulger quietly slipped out of the room. Later in the evening, he came back with a wet and muddy bag and opened it to the leader. To everyone's amazement, a heap of gold and silver coins came pouring out. "Take it all," said Bulger. "I have at last decided to give up the friend I told you about."

26 With open Arms

Simon was a rich farmer who lived with his two sons. John, the younger son was bored and wanted to live in the city. He asked his father for his share of money so that he could go away. The father loved both his sons and gave John his share of money but was quite sad in his heart. Now John started living the high life of the city and was quite happy with his new-found friends. Since it had never occurred to him to earn a living, the day arrived when he had no money left. All his so-called friends deserted him and for the first time in his life John did not have money to buy food. He was finally forced to work on a farm where he looked after the animals. It was then he thought of his father and felt he must go back and beg his forgiveness. Simon had not given up hope of seeing his younger son return and was only too happy to see him coming down the road one day. John did not need to ask for forgiveness—he had been pardoned by his father the moment he had left him. John fell at his father's feet and wept out his regret and sorrow for having hurt him.

27 A Plum Treat

Teddy was four years old and was adored by everyone. He lived with his parents and grandparents in a big house. One day Grandfather bought some red juicy plums for Teddy. His mother washed them and put them in a bowl. She told Teddy to give everyone a plum each. He did that. Then he sat down to eat the rest. Teddy's love for fruit soon became a problem. He did not even want to have lunch or dinner. His mother was getting a bit worried about this. She decided to take him to a doctor. The doctor was a kind and loving lady. The doctor then held Teddy's hand and said, "My son, it is very good to have fruits. But your body also needs vegetables and cereals. Why don't you try to have a little bit of each every day? I will also give you a sweet tonic that will make you want to eat better. You must be a good boy." Teddy promised to do as she said. From the doctor's clinic, Teddy's mother decided to take her son to the vegetable and fruit market. "Teddy, look at all the colourful vegetables," his mother said as she led him to a vegetable shop. "Today you can decide what vegetable you want to eat. You can also choose vegetables for your own salad." Teddy felt very important. Teddy pointed to the beans and said, "Mummy that vegetable looks good. Can we buy some of it? And I would also like to eat that white-coloured vegetable. I don't know what it is called." "It is called cauliflower and it tastes very good. I shall cook it for you this evening," said the mother. Within a week, Teddy had learnt to eat almost all vegetables. He also started liking salads made of tomatoes, cucumbers and carrots.

28 Where Is Peter?

Peter's exams were approaching. There was so much to study and very little time left. He thought his sister, Palma, was very lucky. She was in playschool and had no exams. That evening, Peter's parents had to go out. They asked him to lock the door from inside and study. So he bolted the door after they left and sat down with his books. After studying for an hour, he turned on the TV but soon fell asleep. Later, when Peter's parents returned, his father rang the bell. But Peter didn't open the door. The father again rang the bell, this time a bit longer. But there was still no response. The father and mother were worried now. Scary thoughts flooded their heads. They rang the bell many times but there was complete silence. Palma started crying calling her brother's name. At the noise, the neighbours came out of their houses. "Should we call the police?" asked Mr Clifton. "Maybe we can break the door open," said another

concerned neighbour. "No, just a minute," said Mr Martin. "Let's see if any window is open." He took a round and found one window open. He then asked his son Ricky to climb through in, as the window was too narrow for Mr Martin. Ricky jumped in and found Peter in a room lying on a chair, fast asleep! The TV was loudly on. Ricky quickly opened the main door to let Peter's family and the neighbours in. All saw Peter fast asleep and stretched their lips. The mother was very happy to find her son safe. Peter woke up and was surprised to see so many people in his room. He promised everyone to be careful next time.

29 The Hunter & the Partridge

A flock of partridges lived in a wood. One day, a hunter passed by and saw the flock. He decided to set a snare for them. He scattered some grains on the ground and placed a net over them. The next day, the flock came to the clearing in search of food. One of the partridges began pecking at the grains below the net. Soon it was caught in the net and could not free itself. The other partridges tried to set it free but in vain. "This net is too strong for our beaks," said one partridge. "Let us go and call the rat to help." So the partridges flew in different directions in search of the rat. When the hunter saw the partridges flying away, he came out to catch his prey. The trapped partridge said, "If you set me free, I will show you where my friends have their nests. Then you can lie in wait and catch as many birds as you like." "A fine friend you are!" replied the hunter. "The other partridges are doing their best to help you to get out and you wish to betray them! I will certainly not let you go now."

30 The Boys & the Frogs

A group of boys were playing near a pond. Their attention suddenly went to a number of frogs resting at the pond's edge. The boys forgot their play and began to pelt the frogs with stones. They killed several of them. The remaining frogs dived into the water but the boys didn't stop. One of the frogs lifted his head out of the water and cried out to the boys, "Please stop! For you, it might be some sport but for us, it is death. Don't prove those right who say that one's pain might be another's pleasure."

31 A Treasure Box

Yosef was old and feeble and could not pursue his profession of tailoring any longer. His wife had passed away and his three sons were married and busy with their own lives. They were unwilling to take on the responsibility of looking after their aged father and visited him less and less. Yosef felt unloved and unwanted and decided to teach his sons a lesson. He bought himself a trunk and filled it up with stones and then locked it. When the sons came to visit him next, they noticed the trunk. They started wondering about what could be inside the trunk and the prospect of inheriting some wealth made them change their attitude. They now took turns to stay with their father and cared for him. They did not do it out of love but only with the thought of the treasure in the trunk. One day, Yosef's feeble body finally gave up and he died. When the sons found the keys and opened the trunk, they were shocked to see the stones! While the eldest son lamented about the cruel trick their father played on them, the middle and youngest were full of regret. Meanwhile, hoping against hope the eldest son had emptied out the trunk to still find something at the bottom. Yosef's treasure box was indeed a valuable one. At the bottom were the words ' WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR EACH OTHER.'

32 Jill's first Day at School

It was Jill's first day at school. She was exuberant. She quickly got ready and had breakfast cereal with fruits and milk. Mum put Jill's tiffin-box in her bag and they went to the school-bus stop. There Jill saw one more girl standing with her school bag. She went up to her- "Hello, my name is Jill. What is your name?" "I am Roma. I don't want to go to school," the other girl said and began to cry. "Don't cry, we will stay together," said Jill. The school bus came and both of them got in. Jill and Roma sat together. By the time the bus reached school, it was full. When all were getting off, Jill saw that there were even more children in the school. She held Roma's hand. A teacher took them to their classroom. The classroom was beautiful with colourful chairs and tables. There were picture charts of fruits, vegetables, birds and animals on the walls. Soon the teacher came into the room. "Hello, children!" said she. "I am happy to meet you all. We are going to have a very nice time together, okay... Today we will tell one another stories. From tomorrow we will start lessons. First I will tell you a story, then each of you must tell me a story." After some of the children told stories, it was lunchtime. Jill and Roma shared their tiffin. They also made more friends. After lunch, the teacher took all the children to the playroom. Roma

picked up a doll and started playing. Suddenly, a big girl came there with her group and snatched the doll from Roma. Very angry, Jill walked up to that girl, stamped her foot, and shouted, "Don't hit my friend!" The big girl was surprised. Just then, the teacher walked in and gave the big girl and her group a stern look. "What are you all doing here? This room is meant for the younger children." Roma hugged Jill and said, "Jill, you are my best friend!" That evening, Jill's father asked her how was school. "Oh, it was lovely! I even got a best friend: Her name is Roma." Jill replied happily.

33 The Bishop's Candlesticks

One evening, just as Bishop Myriel sat down to supper, there was a knock on the door. A bedraggled man stood at the doorstep. He introduced himself as Jean Valjean. Now the Bishop knew that Jean Valjean was a thief who had just been released from a nineteen-year imprisonment. Still, the Bishop welcomed him in and offered food. After dinner, the Bishop led his guest to a room for rest. Jean was so tired that he soon fell asleep. However, he woke up very early when it was still dark and remembered the silver cutlery he was served meal in. He stole the silverware and quietly left the house. In the morning, the Bishop was looking for his silver cutlery when he heard a loud knocking. Opening the door, he saw a policeman holding Jean Valjean by the collar. "Oh, there you are!" the Bishop said to Jean. "Why did you forget to take those candlesticks along with the silverware I gave you? Here, take them," the Bishop handed two silver candlesticks from the mantelpiece to Jean. Jean was dumbfounded with shame and surprise, both. After the policeman was gone, the Bishop drew Jean near and said, "Never forget that you have promised me to use this money in starting an honest life." Jean, who had no recollection of ever having made such a promise, remained speechless. The Bishop then resumed- "Jean Valjean, my brother, don't think that I have given you that silver for free. With that, I buy your soul... which I withdraw from dark thoughts and perdition, and give to God. You no longer belong to Satan." Jean fell on the Bishop's knees, crying like a child, to only rise in righteousness later.

34 The Camel & the Arab

An Arab was loading his camel. When he was done, he asked the camel, "So my faithful friend, tell me how would you like it better: going up the hill or down? The camel replied, "The level route must be blocked, that's why you ask me. Right, Master?"

35 By the Bridge

Once upon a time, there was a monastery by the side of a river. It was a fast flowing river and to cross it, the monks had to walk half an hour downstream where there was bridge. The return journey was even tougher since it was an uphill one. However, one of the monks, Friar John, could always go and return quickly. Even the Abbot wondered about his speed. When the Abbot wanted to know about this from Friar John, he replied." The fact is that God has favoured me with coming and going on water." "Why has God granted you this favour?" the Abbot asked. "Perhaps because I am very patient and never get annoyed," the monk said in a very low voice. The Abbot also obtained God's favour as he stopped getting irritated or losing his calm. He could now go back and forth to the fields by walking over the water. One hot summer day they heard cries for help from across the river. There was a fire on the farm. They decided to take the short cut with Friar John reminding the Abbot to keep his cool. After the fire had been put out and the Abbot asked about its cause, the farmers sheepishly confessed that their children had accidentally put fire to the straw bales while playing. The wind did the rest. The Abbots face changed on hearing this and began to shout at the children, and so had to walk back home through the bridge.

36 The Shirt of the happy Man

There was once a powerful king. One day, the king fell ill and none of the court doctors could diagnose what his illness was. All the remedies they found for him were in vain. The king's sadness now penetrated every corner of the palace. One day, a doctor with a long white beard arrived and offered to examine the king and find a cure to his disease. Everyone readily agreed and after a detailed examination, he announced, "Your Majesty will only be cured if he wears the shirt of a happy man." The king's emissaries left immediately and went to every corner of the kingdom. At last they heard a happy song flooding the valley. They followed the voice and found a man singing under a bridge. "Are you completely happy, good man?" they asked him. "Yes, completely happy," replied the villager. "Then give us your shirt, for the king needs it to recover his health," said the emissaries. The man burst out laughing, opened his pauper's jacket, and to everyone's amazement... wore no shirt!

37 Mother's Love

One day, there was a lot of shouting and screaming outside the gates of King Solomon's palace. Two women were fighting and wanted the King to resolve their problem. After being presented before the King, the first woman said, "O great King! I want justice. This woman and I had babies at the same time. Last night, she took my baby and replaced it with her child who had died. And now she says that the dead child is mine." "That's not true, My Lord," the second woman said. "This child is surely mine. Why would I want her child? Will a mother not recognize her own child?" Now King Solomon was known for his wisdom. He called for a sword and handed it over to a guard. He ordered the guard to cut the child into two and give each of the mothers half a child. "Stop!" screamed the second woman. "Do not kill my precious child. Let her take the baby. I would rather give my child away than watch it killed." Solomon had found out the truth. The real other was the one who wanted to see her child alive.

38 Where there is Love, there is God

Martin was a religious man and a hardworking cobbler. One night, he heard a voice in his dream asking him to look out into the street the next day. Martin woke up in the morning and went about his usual routine but he looked out of the window more than he worked. He saw an old soldier clearing the snow with the help of his spade. He seemed very tired, so Martin invited him inside for a cup of tea. The old man blessed him as he walked in and quaffed many cups of tea. After the old man left thanking him for the warm hospitality, Martin went back to work. He heard a baby crying and saw a poor woman trying to shelter the baby from the cold. Martin went to his door and called out to her asking her to come inside. He led them to the stove and gave her some bread and soup. He noticed her shivering and gave her an old cloak. The woman thanked him profusely and left. When it was dusk, Martin brought down his book and was reading when he heard a voice whisper: "First the old man and then the poor woman with the baby." He read his book just where it had opened. It said, "I was hungry, and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink. I was a stranger, and you took me in. In as much as you did it to one of these, you did it to me." Martin understood that God had indeed visited his home.

39 The Necklace

Matilda was a very pretty lady who married a humble clerk. But she was always unhappy and longed for a luxurious lifestyle. One evening her husband gave her an envelope — it was an invitation to the Ministry ball. But instead of being delighted, Matilda cast away the card saying she had nothing to wear! Monsieur Loisel, Matilda's husband, wanted to see her happy and decided to gratify his wife with a new dress even though he could hardly afford to. But Matilda was still unhappy — now she did not have jewels! Monsieur Loisel then suggested she borrow some from her friend. This idea appealed to her and she went to her rich friend the very next day. She tried on various pieces but ended up borrowing just one — a diamond necklace. The day of the ball arrived and Matilda was a great success — she was the prettiest of all the ladies and full of joy! When they reached home, Matilda realised that her necklace was missing! Since they were obliged to return the necklace, they went to the shops looking for an identical one. It took all of Monsieur Loisel's inheritance and additional money that they had, to buy the necklace. They were bogged down with a heavy debt. Then started a period of real difficulty. It took them ten years to pay back all the money they had borrowed. Matilda looked old and haggard now and had lost all her charm. One evening, she met her friend — the one from whom she had borrowed the necklace. When Matilda told her the story of the necklace, her friend was shocked. Her necklace was actually an artificial one!

40 The Birthday Party

Ann, Tess her little sister, her father, and her mother were all ready to leave for Ned's birthday party—who is Ann's school-friend. "Oh no, I don't see Ned's invitation card anywhere! Where is it?" the mother said as the invite bore Ned's address which none of them knew. Ann tried to be helpful- "He lives in Carlton Avenue. He had told me once." "You know his surname?" the father asked Ann. "Yes, it is Durrel." The mother joined forces- "I remember reading C Block on the card!" The father took the phone directory and noted down the addresses of all the people who had the surname 'Durrel' and who lived in C Block of Carlton Avenue. There were five such people. "We'll go to each of these five houses and see if one of them is Ned's," said he. In Carlton Avenue, the father stopped at a house, looking for Ned's. Suddenly, Ann gave a shout. She had seen one of her classmates walking down the road. "That is Stella! She is in my class." The mother quickly opened the car door and walked up to Stella. "Hello, I am

Ann's mother. Are you going to Ned's birthday party?" "No, I am coming back from there," replied Stella. "Can you please give me Ned's house number?" "Yes, it is C-293." The mother thanked Stella and got back into the car. When they finally entered Ned's house, it looked like the party was over. But Ned and his parents warmly welcomed them.

41 The Journey

A two-day long train journey! The mother was anxious. How was she to manage her restless boys, Abe and Ron? The train arrived at the station one hour late. The mother, Abe, Ron and the father boarded their train following the porters who were carrying their luggage. Both the boys were delighted to have a window seat for each. But soon they started bickering over whose was better. "Quiet!" warned the father. "You are not to trouble Mother during the journey." The two boys nodded mutely. The train let out a shrill whistle and started heaving and pulling itself forward with all its might. But the quiet did not last long. "Mum, I am hungry," said Ron. "Me too," chorused Abe. The mother pulled out a huge basket. It had a variety of delicious snacks. The boys greedily piled up their plates and started chomping. Now the next issue to bicker over was who would sleep where. The mother quickly made their beds. Other passengers were also making their beds. Lights in the compartment were being switched off, one by one. The father, the mother and Ron were fast asleep. Abe was still drowsing. Suddenly, he caught sight of a dark shadow slowly walking down the corridor. He seemed to be carefully looking at the luggage lying around. Abe stretched out his arm and shook Ron. Ron at once woke. Both stayed still in their bunks watching out for the man. The man came by once again and tiptoed inside to an elderly woman sleeping on the bunk below. He reached under her pillow and groped. And then... out came a big fat purse! This was surely a thief. Abe nodded to Ron and instantly grabbed the man's hair. Ron jumped down and caught the man's legs. Abe jumped down too and grabbed him round the waist. "Thief! Thief!" shouted they. The thief struggled. But the boys clung on. The noise woke up the other passengers. A few men grabbed the thief and pinned him down. At the next station, he was handed over to the railway police. Abe and Ron were declared heroes!

42 A Service of Love

Joe Larrabee was an artist and Delia Caruthers was a musician and they met at a students' get-together, fell in love, and got married. But after a while, difficult times set in and Delia decided to give up her own music lessons and to become a music teacher herself, to earn some money. She found a rich student who lived in a splendid house. Joe was not too happy at the prospect of Delia working for a living while he pursued his art but Delia comforted him saying it was only temporarily. One day, Joe mentioned that a shop had agreed to keep one of his paintings in their window so he might be able to sell it. At the end of the week, both of them triumphantly put down their income on the dining table. The next weekend, Joe reached home first and kept his week's earnings on the table. Delia arrived later with her left hand bandaged. Now Joe got worried and asked Delia what had happened and what the truth was. Delia burst into tears as she told Joe about her job in a laundry as she had been unable to find a student. Joe was not angry with her since he too had been working in the boiler room of the same laundry firing the engine . They both burst out laughing at their own stories of sacrifice and giving!

43 Shravan

Once upon a time, in a small village in India lived a boy named Shravan. Shravan's parents were not only poor but they were blind also. But Shravan was a dutiful and affectionate child. His parents had grown old and longed to go on a pilgrimage before they died. Shravan seated his parents in cane baskets that hung on either end of a bamboo stick, which he then carried on his shoulder. After finishing their pilgrimage, they finally reached Ayodhya which was ruled by King Dashratha. Shravan found a small hut and made his parents comfortable for the night. His mother was thursty, hence he strolled out looking for water. King Dashratha was out hunting that night. As Shravan bent down to fill his pitcher, the gurgling sound made the king think it was an animal drinking water and he aimed his arrow. The arrow came straight to Shravan and pierced him. The king froze in horror at the sound of a human cry. He rushed to the place and knelt beside the dying man. Shravan told him about his blind parent's and requested him to take some water for them. When King Dashratha broke the sad news to the anxious parents, they cursed him with the same pain of separation from his child. Saying this, they too breathed their last. It is believed that years later when King Dashratha had to go through the exile of his son, Rama, it was actually this curse coming true.

44 The Blind & the Elephant

The inhabitants of a small village in eastern India had never seen elephants. A group of blind people lived on the outskirts of the village. They were also curious about the mysterious animal. One morning, an elephant which had strayed from its herd approached the fields surrounding the village. The villagers hurried to see the huge animal. The village elders decided to let the blind people have the opportunity first to examine the elephant by touching it. They selected six blind people who approached it one by one. The first blind man stretched out his arm which bumped into the elephant's huge belly. He turned around and said that the amazing animal was like a hard, firm wall of rock. Then the second touched a leg. He said that the animal was like a broad-trunked tree with a hairy bark. The third blind caressed a tusk and announced to his companions: "This seems to be the most terrible weapon ever made." The fourth blind seconded him. The fifth blind approached the animal doubtfully and grabbed its trunk. " How terrible!" he shouted in fear. "I've never touched a snake so huge—it is flexible, thick and enormous! Its mouth blows out hot and foul breath!" Thoroughly confused, the sixth blind caught hold of the tail and declared that it is the strongest rope he had ever come across. A village elder explained to them that each one of them had been right and to reach the full image of the elephant they had to unite their views.

45 The wooden Plate

Once upon a time, there lived a happy family consisting of a couple, their nine-year-old son, and the grandfather. The grandfather was now old and his hands would shake like leaves of a tree and he would often drop things. Soon it became difficult for him to eat without spilling and he was always apologizing for dropping or breaking something or the other. The father, his son-in-law, took a decision that upset the rest of the family. The grandfather was to eat by himself and in a wooden plate. The grandfather would quietly wipe away his tears and move his head in resignation. Several weeks went by and one day the son-in-law came back from work to find his son hard at work on a piece of wood. He watched him for a few minutes and then asked him what his project was about. The boy replied without raising his eyes that it was a 'wooden plate' that he was making for him when he got old and his hands shook. From that day, the grandfather never had a meal alone.

46 Perseverence can move Mountains

Once upon a time, a peasant family lived in the middle of a valley surrounded by mountains. Now, Lin-Chung, the father, was a hardworking man. He lived with his wife and four children: three boys and a girl—all strong and handsome. Lin-Chung had to visit the city very often, to sell his produce; to meet with various officials; and it used to take him a long time to travel across the mountains and back. "If only the high mountains did not exist..." he would often think to himself.One day, he summoned his family and told them about his brave idea of 'moving the mountains'. They collected every possible tool that would help them in this laborious exercise and set to work.Fun-Lu was a farmer who lived in the same valley. One day, when Lin-Chung was resting, Fun-Lu went over and remarked sarcastically, "My friend. That is exactly why I am amazed why at your age and in your wisdom you have plunged into this endless task. I do hope you are not offended but it does seem to be foolish and rash to take this on." Lin-Chung thought for a while before he answered his neighbour. Finally, he said, " Fun-Lu, I am not offended by your words for I know that your affection for our family is genuine. I know that I am aging but I have four children. They will marry and have children of their own. They too will multiply and the valley will be filled with our people. They will continue to dig into the mountain and will conquer it." Fun-Lu nodded his head and walked away.

47 In the Sand & on the Rock

Ali and Mahmoud had been walking in the desert for three days. The cold of the night did not let them sleep and the heat of the day overwhelmed them. Suddenly, Ali noticed an oasis at far with water and date palm trees. But Mahmoud said to Ali that it was just a mirage: an imaginary scene of his own thirst and desire. But Ali was so firm about his hallucinations that he began hitting his brother for rebutting him. Mahmoud managed to free himself, went a little away from Ali, and wrote on the sand- "Today, my brother, Ali, hit me." Both of them slept little that night. Next morning, as they continued their journey, Ali shouted once again having noticed an oasis. This time he was right. Both Mahmoud and Ali ran like lightning. Mahmoud in his excitement jumped into the lake. As the lake was very deep, he started to drown. Ali pulled Mahmoud back out with the help of a branch and saved him. Then Mahmoud took a sharp rock and wrote on a large rock beside the lake- "Today my brother, Ali, saved my life." Ali asked him why he had written these words on rock whereas on the previous day he had written on sand. Mahmoud replied that what he had written on the sand would have probably been blown away by the wind but the words on the rock would stay forever.

48 The Cherry Tree

Mr. Washington had a passion for trees. He had an orchard of various trees but a rare cherry tree was his most favourite. He had warned his family and servants to be careful with the tree. The spring arrived and the tree began to bloom. Mr. Washington was overjoyed. He had a son, George. The little boy loved running through the orchard. One day, he came across a shiny hatchet and decided to prune the trees. While the gardeners were taking rest after lunch, George took the hatchet and chopped at everything he came across. The cherry tree too received a fatal blow on its trunk and was split into two. Mr. Washington was furious. He asked everyone as to who was responsible. No one could tell. He then asked George. "Father, I can't lie to you. I did it," George replied lowering his eyes. The heartbroken look that George saw on his father's face was the worst punishment he could have got. "I didn't realize what I was doing. I was so into playing... Forgive me, Father. Please forgive me." Mr. Washington caressed George's head and said, "Although I am hurt to have lost my dear tree but I am also pleased to have a brave and honest son. I prefer your honesty to an entire orchard of cherry trees. Never forget it, my son." And George did never forget it. When he became the president of USA, he remembered and practised the lesson he had learnt when he was young.

49 A Lady saved

Rita and John were returning from their village school. They saw a car moving by them slowly. In the car, they saw a young woman sitting in the back seat. A man had a gun aimed at her forehead. The children were scared to see this. Sharp John picked up a big stone and threw it at the car with all his might. The stone hit the windscreen breaking it at once. The car came to a halt. The driver jumped out and ran away. Rita and John then began giving out loud shouts for help. All the farm workers came running from their fields. They had long sticks and sickles in their hands. One of the workers opened the car-back door and pulled out the man with the gun. The worker hit him on his head and the man fell down flat. Another worker took a rope and tied the man's hands behind him. The young woman came out, horrified and shaking. She thanked the workers to save her. They told her that John and Rita had called them to help. The woman turned to the children and thanked them. She as a gratitude drove them home. She met their parents and told them how brave their children were. She then made a present of a good sum of money to them.

50 The Oak & the Reed

Once upon a time, in the forests of Greece, there were some oak trees which seemed to touch the sky. They were proud and arrogant of their stature and looked at other trees and bushes with disdain. Meanwhile, besides the stream that watered the forest, the reeds too were having a conversation. "Who can match the oaks! We are weak. We do not even have branches to shelter birds. We are worth so little that any one can knock us down." But the wheel of fortune has its own plans! Suddenly, the sky was covered with dark clouds and the storm raged down and shook the trees and bushes. The proud oaks resisted, not wanting to cede to the hurricane force. The storm whirred through their crowns, broke their branches and scattered their acorns far away. The storm raged on the whole night and the first sign of calm came with the morning sun. The first rays of the sun saw the enormous oaks rent up from their roots and scattered all over the sodden ground like defeated giants. The reeds were standing amidst the torrents of water. The oaks had suffered because of their stubborn arrogance and the reeds survived due to their flexibility.

51 The Adventure of the Dring Tram

Once upon a time, there was a little tram called Dring. He was so little that he was not allowed to go on the city streets due to heavy traffic. Lack of use made him shabby and rusty. The overseer decided to sell it. The electric dwarves found out about Dring being scrapped and they had a meeting to help Dring. Electric dwarves are the sparks that run and jump along wires. And so they got down to work and soon had the engine, the bearings and even the bell all oiled and polished and running. The tiny Dring went through the city looking new and shiny. Then Dring saw a girl crying by the road. He asked her what the matter was and she replied, "My father has lost his job. We have no money to stay in our own house and my mother is crying too." "Get on, let's go and see them," said Dring. They found her family and Dring proposed, "Get your furniture and put it in the tram. Come live in it. This will be your home now." The family was overjoyed. The overseer came by the next morning and told Dring that he had to return to the garage. "No, Mr.Overseer. I am not going back. I am useful now. I am home for a family that lost their house," said Dring. The overseer had a good heart and on seeing the happiness of the family, promised not to bother Dring again.

52 The Gift of true Love

It was Christmas. Della had only one dollar and eighty-seven cents to buy a present for her husband Jim. She suddenly had a brilliant idea and promptly wore her old hat and coat and with tears in her eyes walked till she saw the sign "Hair Goods of All Types". Now, Della's knee-length hair was something that both she and Jim were proud of just as they were proud of Jim's grandfather's gold watch. "Twenty dollars," said the lady after lifting Della's hair and Della agreed quickly, bravely fighting back her tears. And then she went shopping. She was eagerly waiting for Jim and praying that he would'nt get angry with her when she heard his steps. Jim's eyes were fixed on Della as soon as he saw her. It was an expression that she did not recognize. She was talking to her husband now and telling about his gift and the reason for her hair cut. Jim woke from his trance and took Della in his arms. He took out a package from his pocket and gave it to Della. Della tore the string and let out a scream of joy which turned to sobbing – for there lay the tortoiseshell combs that she had worshipped in a shop window for long! Jim brought the present by selling his gold watch.

53 The Egg Boy

Long ago in China, there lived a King of great repute. One day, while hunting, he saw a beautiful girl and took the girl with him. He made her stay in a dark room. Somehow, she managed to survive and soon gave birth to a giant egg. The King left the egg in the fields, but the birds protected it with their wings. After a few days, the egg shell cracked open and a beautiful boy child sprang out. Several years passed by and the Egg Boy grew up to be a handsome and strong man. The King had many sons from his wives, but none could match him in wit or marksmanship. Filled with hatred and jealousy, they planned to kill him. However, the mother came to know about the conspiracy and asked the Egg Boy to escape. With the enemies after him, he travelled far and wide until he came upon the great ocean, and cried for help. Immediately, a host of fishes and turtles made a bridge for him. Once the Egg Boy had crossed, they scattered and broke up the bridge. There was no way that his enemies could follow. He crossed the bridge and reached to a suitable land. He became a noble King of the Kingdom.

54 Sujman the Hero

Prince Vladamir's palace was indeed the most beautiful and full of happiness and celebration. Every evening, the nobles and knights met there and recalled their feats of war. However, there was one noble minister, Sujman, who never spoke himself. The Prince noticed his silence and asked him why he did not share his heroics as his companions did. Sujman replied, "Your Highness, allow me to talk about my future rather than my past." This reply made the entire gathering curious and Sujman continued, "I intend to hunt a white swan and place it in your arms without hurting it in anyway. Not one of its feathers will be stained by blood. Not one mark will spoil its beauty." "Such a deed is impossible," said the Prince, " but I believe you and hope to see it happen." Sujman left to look for the white swan till he came to the banks of River Nepra, and learned that the enemies are stationed on the other side of the river. Everyday they would build bridge of wood to attack the city. Sujman crossed the river on his horse as if he were flying over the waters. He destroyed the Tartar army singlehandedly. He was wounded but it did not deter him from fighting on. He dressed his wounds with medicinal herbs once the fight was over. He then went to the Prince's court but the Prince did not believe him and ordered him to be locked in the dungeon. However, he sent a servant to verify Sujman's claims. The servant returned with the confirmation. The Prince released Sujman and promised him every kind of reward and honour, but the noble Sujman replied, "Your Highness! You did not trust my word. Now it is too late. I cannot continue to live here." He went to the river and tore off his medicinal bandages and died peacefully.

55 The clever Girl

There was a poor man whose only wealth was his 16-year-old daughter—a girl cleverer than anyone. One day, the man's cow strayed into his rich neighbour's field and ate some of the crop. The rich man held back the cow till he was compensated. Unable to pay, the poor man went to the Count for justice. The Count listened to both and said: "Justice will be done. But first, both of you bring me three things: what is most pleasurable; the most nourishing; and the quickest." The rich man returned and presented honey, butter and his fastest greyhound in answer to the Count. Now came the poor man's turn. "The most pleasurable is sleep because there is nothing better to have when you are tired. The most nutritious is Earth because it feeds everyone. And the quickest is sight because you can never get anywhere before it." The Count

was amazed and even more when he learnt that the answer came from the poor man's daughter. He proposed that the girl should come to the palace next day, neither walking nor riding, neither naked nor clothed, and bring something that he could not hold in his hands. The next day, the girl put on a net for clothes and sat on a ram with her feet touching the ground. She carried a sparrow in a basket. When she reached the palace, the Count saw that she was neither dress nor naked, neither walking nor riding. When he asked what she had in the basket, she let the sparrow out and asked the Count to catch it. The Count bowed to the girl's cleverness and sought her hand for marriage. Now the girl, who had become a Countess, could not resist her intelligence meddling with the affairs of the Count. He could not tolerate it any more and asked the girl to leave, taking one thing she valued the most. The girl said that she would leave on night. When all were asleep at night, the girl asked some servants to carefully place the sleeping Count in a cart and slowly take them both to her father's house. The Count woke up halfway and asked what was happening. The girl replied that she was taking with her the most valuable thing along as he had promised. Moved by her love and intelligence, the Count ordered the carter to take him and the girl back to the palace.

56 Neither overjoyed nor depressed

Five fishermen were dragging their trawl across the sea-floor. After a couple of minutes, they perceived that the trawl had become quite heavy. The five fishermen jigged about on their boats madly, out of joy. They assumed that they had taken a large catch, and the countless fishes would give them many a month to thrive in, without working. In their utter joy, they rowed to the seashore singing out victory songs. When they had reached the shore, they dragged the trawl out of water. And what they found?? To their great sorrow, the trawl had only few fish; the rest was sand and stones. The poor men were crestfallen. One of their company, an old man, said, "Let's just stop lamenting, Brothers. Why miss what we never got? I have understood now that sorrow is the twin sister of joy. For we, who were rejoicing few moments ago, are now silent with grief. Learn this: Joys and sorrows come and go alternately. If we are happy now, be prepared to be sad next. And if we are sad, await to be happy next. Should we follow this rule of life, we will never be neither overjoyed – nor depressed."

57 The rich Mohan & the poor Sohan

Mohan and Sohan were friends. Mohan was a rich jeweller, while Sohan was very poor. One day, Sohan borrowed a few gold ornaments from Mohan for his sister's wedding and promised to pay back within six months from the date of borrowing the jewels. But, it had hardly been a month since the wedding and Mohan began asking for his money. Mohan had an evil design on Sohan's properties. He wanted Sohan to sign some legal documents, saying that he had mortgaged his house and other properties against the gold ornaments. Sohan pleaded his helplessness, but Mohan was firm on his demand. Finding no means to bring his friend to terms, Sohan agreed to sign the papers on one condition- since Sohan was a poor man and did not have proper amenities to appear before the court of law; Mohan would lend his horse, his clothes and his shoes to Sohan. Mohan readily agreed to this. Sohan took the judge's permission to question Mohan in the court. Then Sohan cleverly asked Mohan that whose clothes and shoes was he wearing? Mohan was quick to take his own name. In his final move, Sohan asked "And the horse that I rode to the court?" "The horse too belongs to me," shouted Mohan. The entire courtroom echoed with laughter. The judge too laughed and dismissed the case saying that Mohan needed medical attention. Thus, Sohan foiled Mohan's wicked plans.

58 Still Waters run deep

A torrent of water used to crash to the ground with a great sound near a mountain. Its force and noise was so terrifying that travellers feared to go near it. One day, a traveller was attacked by a group of robbers while on his way to the next town. Scared and being pursued by the fiery men, he came to the waterfall. Surprisingly, the torrent was quite shallow, but due to its great noise and its gushing force, the traveller could not summon up enough courage to cross it. So, he kept riding on with the robbers in hot pursuit until he came to a river. The river was calm and peaceful and had clear water. Encouraged, the traveller ventured into the water. But the river was much deeper than it had seemed and unable to swim, the traveller soon drowned along with his horse. Indeed, still waters run deep. Sometimes those who make no or little noise can be dangerous.

59 The Priest & the Diamonds

Once, there lived a deceitful priest in a village. One day, a few merchants from the nearby town came to the village. They sold their goods and purchased six large-sized diamonds. But, they had heard stories of looting in the area. So, on their return journey, in order to avoid getting robbed, they swallowed the pieces of diamond each. The clever priest somehow learnt of their plan and decided to steal the diamonds. He went to the merchants and became friends with them. One evening, the merchants and the priest were passing through the jungle. They also heard the crows cawing. The shrewd priest knew that the crows were informing the nomads about the presence of wealth with the merchants. They came running with sticks and spears and attacked them. They searched their clothes and luggage, but couldn't find the diamonds. The smart priest was aware of their evil intention. He thought that if they kill a merchant and found the diamond in his body, they would surely slaughter the rest of them. So he stepped forward. He said to the chief of the group "You kill me first. If you find the diamond in my body, kill the rest of my brothers. Otherwise let them go away." The priest had thought that the chief won't listen to him, but to his great dismay the chief liked the idea and killed him immediately. He slit his stomach, but could not find any diamond. So he allowed all the other merchants to go home.

60 The Tree with the golden Seeds

In the ancient times of Quechuas, people worshipped the Mother Earth—Pachamama. She rewarded them with abundant crops, sweet fruits and every kind of animal to eat. But so much food and drink made the people lazy. Pachamama was very sad and decided to teach the ungrateful people a lesson. So she sent a drought and everything dried up from lack of water. And came the day when there was no food or water. Urpila was maddened by the hungry pleadings of her children. She ran to an altar and begged the goddess for mercy. Exhausted with depair, Urpila fell asleep. She dreamt that Pachamama appeared and said, "Don't lose hope. You people have realised your mistakes and will respect me again in repentance. Happiness will return to you people." Urpila woke up and saw golden seeds falling abundantly from the nearest tree. She ran to her village and informed the people. People collected the seeds, ate them, and sowed them in the fields. It rained heavily and the earth was dressed in green again.

61 The Gentleman & the delicious Dishes

Long ago, there lived an honest gentleman in a village. But his wife didn't care for him. She had made friends with a charming youth. Once, while she was cooking delicious dishes, the gentleman got suspicious and asked her about it. The wife replied cleverly, "I'm going to offer these dishes to the temple of a goddess. It's situated on the outskirts of the village." The answer didn't convince the gentleman and he decided to find out the truth. He followed his wife without her knowledge. He reached the temple before his wife and hid himself behind the statue of the goddess. On arriving, his wife began to pray to the goddess.The gentleman, from behind the statue of goddess, changed his voice and said, "Dear Lady! I'm very pleased with your worship. Listen to me carefully. Make such delicious dishes daily and serve them to your husband. One day, he'll surely go blind." The gentleman's wife was happy because once her husband went blind, there would be no obstacles. From that day on, she prepared delicious dishes for her husband to eat. As per plan, the gentleman, one day pretended to lose his eyesight. She informed her friend about the incident. He quickly reached the gentleman's house to meet her. Meanwhile, the gentleman stormed in and thrashed the youth severely.

62 The Astrologer who fell into the Well

In Miletus—hundreds of years back—lived a renowned astrologer. He had read all the books that a good library could have. Yet, he had many questions for which he travelled miles – in order to find the answers. The astrologer had a habit of taking a walk after dinner. The astrologer was acutely fascinated by the night sky. One night, looking at the sky, he wondered, "How has this space been created? These planets stand without a support and still never fall! And the sky? From here, it does not seem to be very large, though the fact is it is only a small portion of the whole galaxy. How unbelievable!" As the astrologer was lost in his admiration, he didn't realize where he was walking to. He walked and walked—with his face up—and lo! He fell into a well! A bystander, who was watching the whole episode, laughed at the astrologer and said, "What kind of an astrologer are you? You want to know about the heavenly things above but, don't see what is lying under your feet."

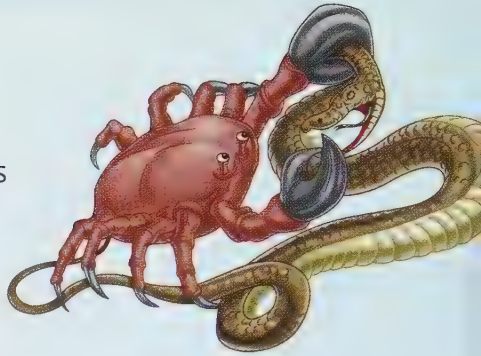
63 The Prince & the Bear

There lived a prince who had passion for hunting of animals. One day, he went for his usual hunting spree in a deep jungle. He searched for hours and hours but to his great disappointment, he couldn't catch a single animal. Just then, he saw a tiger coming towards him. The prince got scared and scrambled up a tree. Up in the tree he saw a bear already sitting on a branch. He began to tremble with fear. But to his utter surprise the bear politely addressed him. The bear assured the prince not to worry and be his guest. But, the tiger hanged around. With the sun set, the tired prince fell fast asleep. The tiger said to the bear, "This is a human being. Human beings are our enemies. Throw him on to the ground for my meal." But the bear refused to listen to the tiger. In the morning, when the prince woke up, he saw the bear sleeping beside him. The tiger cooked up a plan and said to the prince, "Don't trust this wicked bear. It's my humble advice that you push this bear down before me. I'll eat him and let you go." The foolish prince went by the tiger's words and pushed the bear off the branch. But the bear caught hold of another branch of the tree and saved his life. Dejected, the bear cursed the prince for his stupid act.

64 A Horse & a Stag

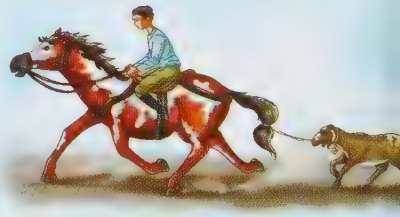
A horse was grazing on a grassland which he had all to himself. He was enjoying his food and freedom. After a while, a stag came there and started nibbling on the grass. Although there was enough grass for both of them, yet the horse didn't like sharing it with the stag. So he wished to get rid of him. As he was scheming, he saw a man passing by. He went to the man and sought his help in what he wanted. The man agreed and said that he would have to mount him to chase the stag. The horse gave his consent. Soon, the man rode on the horse, chased the stag, and killed him. Now the horse was waiting for the man to get off from him. But the man refused. The horse flung and kicked in rage but all he got was a good whipping. Ultimately, he had to submit to the man who then enslaved him within his farm to work.

65 Sagar, Crab & Snake



Once upon a time, a young man named of Sagar lived with his mother. One day, Sagar had to go to some other town for an important business. His mother was worried and said "My dear son, don't travel alone. Better take a companion with you." But Sagar didn't pay attention to his mother's advice. Sagar's mother was not convinced. She somehow got hold of a crab and put it in her son's bag. Finaly, Sagar kept the crab in a camphor box and started his journey. He had to walk a long distance to reach the other town. He was tired and decided to take a little rest. So, he lay under a huge banyan tree and was soon fast asleep. In the hollow of that banyan tree, there lived a snake. Seeing Sagar fast asleep, the snake climbed down. The snake was attracted to the box of camphor, which was kept in the bag. As soon as the snake entered the camphor box, the crab sitting inside caught hold of its neck and killed it. When Sagar woke up, he was surprised to find a dead snake lying beside him. He remembered his mother's advice- take a companion with you.

66 The Fool & the Crooks



Long time ago, there lived a fool in a village. The fool had one horse and one goat, as his pets. Once, he decided to sell his pets. He tied a bell round the neck of the goat with the help of a thin string and tied the other end of the string to the horse's tail. Then he mounted his horse and set out for the market place. Meanwhile, some crooks were on the prowl to rope in their next victim. When they saw the fool approaching, one of the crooks untied the bell from the goat's neck and tied it with the horse's tail. A little later the second crook asked the fool to stop and look behind. "Sir how is it that you have hung a bell by your horse's tail? What purpose does it serve?" he asked. The fool was left speechless. Meanwhile, the third crook came to the fool and said, "Sir, I've seen a man running away with your goat. If you like, I can chase the thief on your horse and get back your goat?" The fool was easily persuaded and happily got down from his horse. The crook mounted the horse and rode away. The fool waited for hours in the hope of seeing his pets back, but it never happened.

67 The Merchant's Son

Far in a village, lived a merchant with his son. The son use to recite a line from a poem so often that he was christened 'You get what you are destined to.' One day, a beautiful princess, named Chandra, went to the city where she saw a handsome prince and fell in love with him. Eager to meet the prince, Chandra asked her maid to fix a meeting. The maid conveyed the message to the prince who agreed. Meanhgwhile, 'You get what you are destined to' came wandering near the palace. Seeing a rope hanging from one of its windows he climbed up and entered Chandra's room. Since it was dark, the princess could not see the merchant's son. She entertained him lavishly, but the prince didn't utter a word. "Why don't you speak?" asked the princess. "You always get what you are destined to," answered the merchant's son. She became furious and turned him out of her chamber. Then 'You get what you are destined to', reached a nearby temple. The watchman of the temple requested the merchant's son to go and sleep in his room. But the merchant's son, by mistake, entered the watchman's daughter's room who was waiting for her lover. She did not recognize the merchant's son in the darkness and married him. She was horror-struck when she learned that she had married the wrong man. She instantaneously kicked him out. Outside, he joined a passing marriage procession. When the ceremony was about to start, a mad elephant appeared on the scene. Every one ran for their life. But, the merchant's son rushed to help the bride. The bride, who was actually Princess Chandra, was moved by his gesture and expressed her desire to marry the merchant's son. They both lived happily ever after.

68 Fortune & the Beggar

A beggar sat lamenting her fate and wondered why the rich man across the street was never satisfied with his lot. One day, Fortune came to the beggar and said that she would keep filling her apron with gold coins till she was asked to stop; but that if even a single coin fell to the ground, all the coins would turn to dust. So, Fortune started filling the beggar's apron. When it was full, she asked if she should stop. But the greedy beggar wanted more. The apron soon became too heavy and tore, and the coins fell through and turned to dust.

69 Courtesy

In a middle of a village, dwelled a poor priest with his family. He used to perform rituals in the nearby villages. One day, another priest came to his house and said, "I've to conduct some prayers. Will you kindly allow me to stay in your house for a few days?" The priest willingly accepted his humble request. The priest asked his wife to take special care of the guest. His wife was angered by his generosity and said, "It's not enough to be courteous only. There must be something in the house to give to the guest. Unfortunately, I've nothing in my kitchen to offer. Such is the situation in this house. And you ask me to take full care of your guest." The priest's wife was very unhappy and not ready to listen to her husband. The priest consoled his wife and said, "Dear, I know, we're poor but even so we should offer some food to our guest. It's more about the expression of our good feelings than the food." The wife realized the true intention of her husband's nature. Without wasting any time, she prepared a sweet dish with the little sesame seeds she had stored in the house and offered it to the guest.

70 The Boy who cried Wolf

Once upon a time, there lived a young shepherd boy named Ence. He was as good-looking as the natural beauty around him. One day, Ence was sitting on a stone watching his sheep grazing. Some of the villagers were working at the foot of the hill. Suddenly, he thought of a prank to amuse himself. He sprang to his feet and started crying out loud, "Help! Help! There is a wolf. Please help!" The villagers down ran up the hill. On reaching they asked, "What happened? Where is the wolf?" Ence burst out laughing and said, "I was just kidding. There's no wolf." The villagers scolded him and went away. Next day, he again played his naughty tricks and had a good laugh at his feat. On the third day, when Ence was tending his sheep on top of the hill, the villagers working downhill again heard his cries. They didn't pay any heed. They were sure it was a joke. So they kept on working. But this time, Ence was not lying. A ferocious wolf had really come and clawed one of his sheep away. From that day, Ence never tried on his mischiefs.

71 The Potter's Truth

Once lived a potter by the name of Rajan. Rajan was in a habit of drinking liquor. One day, after getting drunk he stumbled on a broken pot and fell down. His forehead was badly ripped with the sharp edge of the broken pieces of pot and he started bleeding profusely. The cut was so deep that it left a big scar on his forehead. Years past, and the potter gradually lost his business. He decided to settle in some other part of country and start afresh. There he, somehow, got himself employed at the emperor's service. One day, the emperor noticed the big scar on the forehead of the potter; and mistook Rajan as a brave man who might have received the scar in a fierce fight with some soldier of the enemy. So, the emperor decided to designate the potter to a higher position in his army. Later, he decided to make the potter the Chief of the Army. So he asked Rajan, "General, what's your name? How did you get this scar on your forehead? What was the name of the battle you fought in?" The Potter was in a drunken state, he replied "Your Majesty, I'm a potter by profession. Once I fell down on a broken pot in a drunken state and got wounded. This scar is the result of that wound." Hearing this, the emperor got furious. He ordered his soldiers to throw the potter out of the army and the kingdom.

72 The Miller, his Son & their Donkey

One day, an old miller and his son were driving their donkey to a fair in a nearby town. On the way, the old miller mounted his son on the donkey and continued the journey. After a while, they came upon a group of old men engaged in a debate. "See, the young have no respect for the old," exclaimed one. "The idle lad rides his donkey, while the old father walks. What a shame!" The good natured miller, in order to please them, asked his son to dismount and got up himself. Soon, they came upon a river with a wooden bridge. Standing nearby were a group of old men. "Why Sir, is that your donkey?" asked one. "Yes!" replied the miller. "Poor soul, perhaps, you can carry it across and relieve it of its burden." "Anything to please you, Sir!" said the miller and tied the limbs of the donkey to a pole and carefully began to cross the bridge. The donkey, however, got scared by the weird treatment. It kicked and brayed tearing away from the ropes and fled.

73 King Nanda & Vararuchi

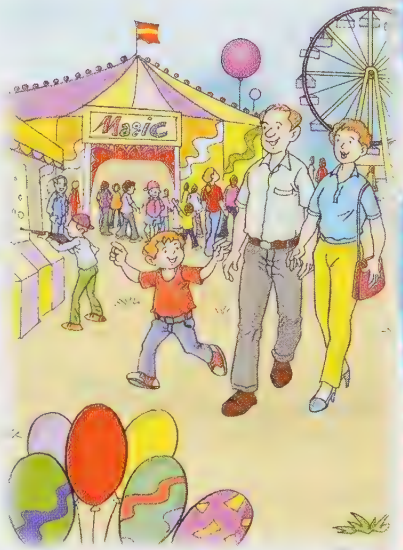
Once upon a time, there lived a brave king by the name of Nanda. The king had an intelligent minister called Vararuchi. One day, Vararuchi's wife got very angry with her husband. Being a lovable husband, Vararuchi went to his wife to comfort her. He asked her the reason of her unhappy demeanor. "Then get your head shaved and fall at my feet if you really wish to make me happy," his wife said flippantly. In order to make his wife happy, he did exactly as told. His wife was delighted and normalcy was restored in their life. Similarly, another day, King Nanda's wife also became angry with her husband. King Nanda also loved his wife very much. "Darling!" he said to his queen. "Tell me what is it that I can do to make you happy?" "Well," replied the queen, "I'll put reins on your mouth and ride you like a horse. You must also neigh." The king did exactly as desired by the queen. The next day, the king was having his customary seating in his court. Then his minister Vararuchi came to him. The king looked at Vararuchi and laughed at him. He quizzed him on his new hairstyle. Vararuchi replied, "Your Majesty, I've shaved off my head for the same reason for which you neighed like a horse yesterday." The king simply simpered.

74 Rose & Amaranth

One fine morning, a Rose and an Amaranth in the garden were talking to each other. Amaranth said to Rose, "You are called the 'Queen of Flowers', being the most beautiful of all. No matter how much I envy you, but I can't help praising you." Rose replied: "Why do you compliment me to the skies? You are no less beautiful. People call you "Bleeding Love" for your shape and colour. You equally contribute to the glory of this garden." At this, Amaranth said, "Very kind of you to say that. Indeed your heart is as lovely as you look. But how can I forget that you are the first choice of a lover for his lady or a votary for his god. Rose explained, "Dear Friend, you might be right about whatever you have said for me. But there is one thing of which I too am jealous of you." Amaranth curiously asked, "What is that?" Rose said, "Do you know the meaning of your name?" Amaranth said, "No." Rose replied, "It means 'unwithering'. You

are everlasting! But my life is so short. As soon as I gain youth, I am cruelly snatched away from my family. I believe you are far luckier than me in this case." Amaranth consoled her sad friend saying, "It really doesn't matter how long you live. As long as we are together, let's enjoy our friendship – which is more important." And Rose and Amaranth enjoyed their friendship till they were together.

75 Bobby's Day at the Fair



Bobby, Dad and Mum went to a fair held in their town. It had everything Bobby could ask for. There was a balloon-seller with lots of balloons in many colours, shapes and sizes. Bobby chose the biggest yellow balloon. He was very happy. The crowd had grown larger. Bobby was a little worried about his balloon. He held it up high but... when he reached the ice-cream man, he found that his balloon was not in his hand! "Mum!" shouted he. "My balloon is lost!!! Dad, please find it for me." "Don't worry, Bobby. We will buy you another one," said Dad. "No, I want MY balloon! The same one!" insisted Bobby. "Come, let's go to that giant wheel," suggested Dad. The sad boy held his father's hand and wasn't scared of the big ride. Slowly, the wheel began to move, speeding up every minute. "Dad, I can see the top of all the buildings. Look! There's Mum standing and—" Bobby stopped suddenly. He was looking at the sky. He could see his big yellow balloon flying. "There, my balloon! You see, Dad?! It is going where all the children will be able to see it and be happy. Can we have another ride on the giant wheel, please?"

76 The bald Man & the Fly

A bald man gave himself a heavy slap while trying to ward off a fly from biting him. Escaping, the fly ridiculed the man at his helplessness to evade impending occurrences such as: death. The Bald man was quick to respond saying that he has no regrets. Rather he would try his level best to kill the ill-favoured and contemptible insects who delights in sucking human blood.

77 The Deity & the Weaver

Mohan was a weaver by profession. One day, while he was weaving, his handloom broke down. Mohan decided to fetch the wood to fix his broken handloom. There he came across a Shinshapa tree. As soon as he raised his axe to cut down the tree, he heard a voice saying, "Stop! Please don't cut this tree. It's my home. Instead ask for a boon and I'll grant it." Mohan was thrilled and asked for some time. The deity agreed to it. Mohan returned to his town. There he consulted his friend, a barber. After listening to the whole story, the barber asked him to wish for a kingdom. The weaver liked his suggestion but sought to seek his wife's advice. The barber warned his friend against it, as he assumed that his wife might come up with an unrewarding idea. But the weaver went to his wife. He narrated the whole story to her. "Your barber friend is a fool," said his wife. "Kingdoms have always been a source of trouble. You'd have to look after the welfare of your people. Rama had to go into exile. So, it's better that you ask for something, which would bring more benefits to us. You may ask for two more hands and one more head so that you could weave more cloth and earn more money." Agreeing to this, the weaver approached the tree deity. The deity fulfilled his wish. But while the weaver was returning home full of joy, the town people saw him and got frightened. They took him to be some kind of a monster. They began pelting stones at the weaver and killed him.

78 Shyamu the Weaver

In a distant village, once lived a weaver called Shyamu. He weaved the finest cloth in the entire kingdom. But he still remained a poor man, while other weavers were quite rich as compared to him. This leaved him dejected and unhappy. He decided to abandon his native village and seek his fortune in some other town. Yet, to his ill-fate, Shyamu couldn't gain much in the new town. He became frustrated and decided to end his life. As he was about to jump on the deep river, he heard a voice from the heaven calling, "Hold it, don't

commit suicide. It is I, God. I'm pleased with your hardwork. Ask any boon from me and I'll grant it." Shyamu wished for plenty of riches. Seeing that Shyamu was firm on his demand, God said, "First go to your native town and meet the two traders living there. One is known as 'Secret Wealth' and the other as 'Useful Wealth'." Shyamu became very happy. He went back to his native town. There, he decided to first visit the 'Secret wealth'. When 'Secret Wealth' saw Shyamu, he became very angry. He talked to Shyamu in a foul language. Then Shyamu went to meet 'Useful Wealth'. 'Useful Wealth' was much delighted to see Shyamu. Even the other members of his house welcomed him. They served him with delicious food. They talked to him in a friendly tone. Witnessing this, the weaver realised that though 'Useful Wealth' was not a wealthy man, he was far more contented in his life than the 'Secret Wealth'. His wish for a lot of money was granted by God. Shyamu started yielding a modest life with his wealth.

79 The little pink Rose

Once, there lived a lonely little pink rosebud. One day, someone knocked at her door. She got alarmed and asked who was it? "It's the Rain, and I want to come in," said a soft, sad, little voice. The frightened rosebud didn't allow the rain in. But the rain kept on tapping the door. Soon there came a little rustling, whispering sound, all round the window. It was the sunshine, this time. The little pink rosebud refused to let the sun inside and sat still again. After sometime, she could heard the TAP, TAP, TAP, and RUSTLE, WHISPER, RUSTLE, all up and down the window pane, and on the door, and at the key-hole. Both the rain and the sun were eager to come in. This time the little pink rosebud relented. She opened the door a little wee crack, and they came in. Clasping her hand they raced with her, right up to the top of the ground. Then they said, "Poke your head through!" So she poked her head through; and she was in the middle of a beautiful garden. It was springtime, and all the other flowers had their heads poked through; and she was the prettiest little pink rose in the whole garden!

80 The four foolish Friends

Four scholar friends decided to admit into the city's leading university with the aim of acquiring more knowledge. After a period of five years of learning, they came out.

Returning, they came upon a river. There in the river, they saw a large leaf floating. One of the friends said, "This leaf is like a raft. It'll save our lives." And with these words, he jumped onto the leaf. Since he didn't know how to swim, he began to drown. The second friend caught hold of his hair and said, "When a thing is going to be fully destroyed, a wise man saves atleast half of it." So he cut the drowning friend into two halves with a sword. The remaining three proceeded further on their journey. They reached a village where they were welcomed by the villagers and were invited for lunch. One friend was served noodles. He consulted his book which said: "Anything lengthy is a cause of destruction." So he didn't take his meal and went away hungry. The second friend was served a coconut dish. Seeing the dish, he remembered the verse that said: "Frothy things have temporary life." He also refused to have the meal. The third friend was served with a dish that had snacks with a hole in the middle. He thought of the verse which meant 'the holes are like defects and are a sure sign of approaching disaster' and denied the meal. In this way, the three learned idiots had to go hungry for days till they returned home.

81 The Merchant & the Sweeper

Dharma was a rich merchant. On the occasion of his daughter's marriage, he invited the king and the entire kingdom to bless the couple. A sweeper in the king's palace by the name of Gopal also attended the wedding. He chose to sit next to the royal family members. Dharma got mad at this and drove Gopal out of the premises. The sweeper felt insulted and decided to take revenge. One morning, while sweeping the area near the king's bed, Gopal said that the merchant was carrying an affair with the queen. Hearing this, the king got furious and questioned Gopal. Gopal was quick to deny saying that he usually gabbled when drowsy. Unsatisfied with Gopal's answer, the king began to withdraw his favours towards Dharma. Dharma was baffled by the sudden transition in king's behaviour. One day, Dharma encountered the sweeper outside the palace. Gopal laughed mockingly when he saw the merchant. Dharma understood the reason behind the king's changed behaviour. The next day, the merchant invited Gopal to his house. Then he apologised for his cruel behaviour. Gopal too being a thoughtful man forgave Dharma and promised him to fix the confusion that had been created. He once again pretended to mutter drowsily- "The king is very dirty. He eats cucumbers in the toilet." When the king heard this, he realized that the sweeper was an idiot and his words couldnot be taken seriously. After a deep thought, the king invited Dharma to the palace. Thus the merchant's former status was regained.

82 The young Man & the Swallow

In a town of Colorado, a family lived. The family had a man, his wife, and their two sons. The name of the elder son was Cole and the younger was called Reggie. Both were adults now. Where Cole understood his responsibilities of being the first son, Reggie grew up to be a rake. The whole family had given up bringing him on the right path. Almost everyday, there would be contentions in the house because of Reggie. One day, the strife between Reggie and his family went beyond limits and Reggie left the house with whatever property he held. Reggie was a free bird now. He pauperized himself by spending all he had on gambling and luxurious lifestyle. Eventually, he was left with only one overcoat to save himself from the biting cold of Colorado. One morning, he found a Swallow flying in the sky. He thought that the spring was near. Hence, he would not need his coat. He sold it to use the received money in gambling as his last chance to mend his marred destiny. But, in fact, that Swallow was out long before the spring. Reggie lost the game. Now he didn't even have his overcoat. Reggie was lying on a bench by a frozen brook when he found the same Swallow in the sky and falling before his eyes, iced up to death. Seeing the dead Swallow, Reggie foresaw his end also.

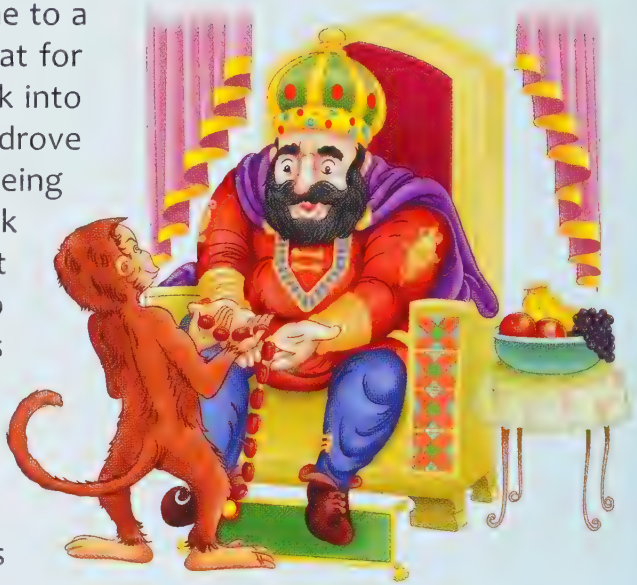
83 The blind Man & the Whelp

There was a blind man who could discern animals just by touching them with his hands. One day, a whelp of a Wolf was brought to him. The blind man was requested to tell about it also what animal it was. He felt it with his hands and said, "I am a little confused that whether it is the cub of a fox or the whelp of a wolf... But this I am really sure about that it would not be safe to admit it into the sheepfold."

84 The Boy bathing

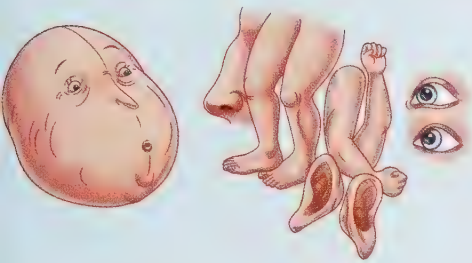
A boy was bathing in the shallow edge of a river. Enjoying, he went ahead into the deep part and was now in the danger of being drowned. He shouted for help. A passing traveller came near but instead of helping, the man stood by and scolded the boy. "Who told you to take bath in the deep?" "Kindly scold me after you have saved me! Counsel without help is useless, Sir!"

85 King Chandra & the Monkey Chief



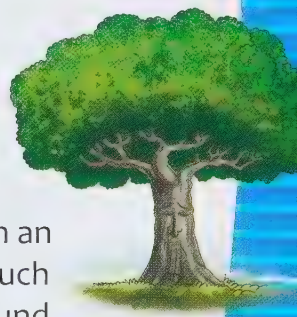
King Chandra had a huge garden which was home to a large community of monkeys. The king had a goat for pet. The goat was a glutton and would often sneak into the royal kitchen for food. The chief cook always drove him out with smouldering sticks whenever caught. Being an intelligent animal, the monkey chief was quick to foresee that one day the fed-up cooks would set the goat on fire. The blazing pet then might rush to the stable and roll onto the hay stack to ease off his pain. As a result, the hay would catch fire burning many horses. He knew that the fat of a freshly killed monkey is applied to cure the burns of a horse. In such a situation, the monkeys would be slaughtered. The monkey chief immediately advised his followers to abandon the garden. But they ignored him. So, the monkey chief himself left the place to a safe one. One day, his prediction came true. When he received the news of the slaughter of his fellows, he became very sad and was revengeful. One day, as he was approaching a lake to quench his thirst, he noticed some footprints going into the lake, but not a single one coming out. Although he was curious to know the mystery, he thought it better not to take any risk. Suddenly, a big black monster appeared out of the water wearing a necklace of jewels. The monkey chief got frightened, but the monster was pleased with the monkey chief's cleverness as he chose not to enter the lake. He granted him a wish. The monkey chief expressed his intentions to punish King Chandra. The monster said that he would devour him. The monkey chief said that he required his necklace for that. The monster gave him the necklace. With it, the monkey chief went to the king's palace and told him that he got it from the lake of jewels. The king set out for the lake taking his all family members and courtiers along in the greed of gathering as much as was possible. On arriving at the lake, the monkey chief advised the king to allow the others to get into the lake first. While the king waited at the edge, his family members and courtiers all jumped into the lake. The king stood for a long time but there was no sign of anyone coming out. The monkey chief swiftly scrambled up a tree and broke the horrific news to the king and thus took his revenge.

86 The Belly & the Human Body



Once upon a time a war took place—such a war that had never happened before or would happen ever again. In this war, all parts of the human body were standing against the Belly! What led to the war was the various body parts—Brain, Lungs, Liver, Kidneys, Arms, Legs, Feet, Hands, etc.—getting together to discuss: "All of us work non-stop – day and night. We exhale and inhale continuously. It is because of us that a human body functions properly. But what does this Belly do?" "Nothing, but lying idle," they scorned. "And yet all the food goes into the Belly. He who does nothing consumes it all and does not even offer us any – discrediting our efforts completely." Then they went to the Belly and said, "O you ungrateful Belly! You have enjoyed enough. All the hard work we do, and you relish the fruits! Not any longer! We have decided to stop working for you." And so all the body parts parted themselves from the Belly and stopped feeding him. After a few days, the Belly began to have pangs for food. It grew weaker by the day. But the other members were also shocked and confused to see that they too were starving. They realised that even though the Belly took all the food, it was his job to distribute the nutritional value equally between all the parts of the body. So they went to the Belly and apologised, and all the body parts restarted feeding the Belly to health.

87 The Walnut Tree



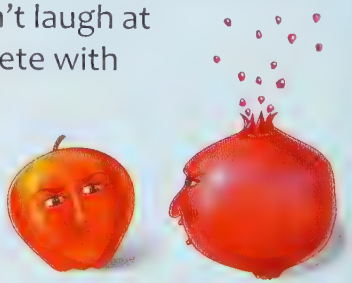
There was once a bountiful Walnut Tree growing by the road. It produced walnuts in abundance—big in size and sweet in taste. People would beat the tree with sticks and stones so that the nuts broke off from the branches. One day, a man from an adjacent town was passing by the Walnut Tree. He was happily surprised to see such a huge tree laden with his most favourite nuts. When he went near the tree, he found that it was too high to reach with his hands. So he picked up a stone and hurled it towards a full branch. Some walnuts did fall but he wanted the entire branch to be stripped. So he walked around to find a stick. The man then began pounding the branch till all the walnuts had fallen at his feet. He gathered the nuts and continued his journey. The poor, helpless, innocent and wounded Walnut Tree was sobbing profusely. It said to itself, "I please these humans with my sweet walnuts and they requit me with beatings. What a destiny I am born with! I give happiness to others and they give me pain."

88 The Merchant & the Barber

A merchant had lost his entire wealth and was going more into depression day by day. He had almost decided to end his life. One night, a divine being appeared in his dream and said to him, "I'm wealth, gathered by your forefathers. You are its legitimate heir. Tomorrow, I shall come to your house in the guise of a monk. Just hit me on my head with a stick and I'll turn into solid gold." The merchant's wife had called in a barber next day to get their son a haircut. Soon after the arrival of the barber, a monk came to the merchant's door. The merchant welcomed the monk in and then hit his head with a stick. The monk fell down and turned into pure gold from head to toe. The barber, who had witnessed everything, thought to do the same thing to become rich like the merchant. So, he invited some magical monks to his home for lunch. As soon as the monks entered the house, the barber started hitting them on their heads with a heavy stick. Some died, while some were badly injured. Soon the news went viral in the entire township. The barber was pronounced death penalty by the town magistrate.

89 The Pomegranate Tree, Apple Tree & Bramble

The Apple Tree and the Pomegranate Tree were debating as to who was more beautiful. The Apples from their tree said, "We are the most favourite of every fruit lover. We adorn the dining tables of the rich. Our shape is that of a heart and the colour is that of blood." "Don't laugh at us, you arrogant Apples. If you are red, we too are red. We can also compete with you in the matter of sweetness. Besides, you are so plain-looking from inside; while we are filled with bead-like seeds. Each bead is shaped and coloured like a rich red ruby." As the Apple Tree and the Pomegranate Tree were busy defending their respective self-importance, the Bramble who was watching them in silence interrupted them: "For heavens' sake, my friends! Stop fighting over your vain reputations. At least when I am around." The Apple Tree whispered to the Pomegranate Tree, "I was fighting with you despite the fact that you are useful fruit. But what did this short, thorny, useless bush think of him self when he asked us to behave in his presence?" And the two trees kept exchanging their shocked looks with each other.



90 The Farmer & the Snake

Bhola, a poor farmer, owned a piece of barren land. One day, he was fast asleep under a tree. When he woke up, he saw a snake coiled up at a distance from him. The snake hissed loudly. The frightened Bhola took the fuming snake as Lord Cobra, that must have cursed his land. So, the farmer offered a bowl of milk to the snake and prayed to him. The snake was pleased at this and asked Bhola to bring him a bowl of milk every day. The snake left a shining gold coin in the empty bowl as a blessing. Bhola was overjoyed. He started feeding the snake and collected a gold coin daily. His barren land began to bear fruit. Soon Bhola became a rich man. One day, he had to visit a neighbouring village for some business. He called his son and assigned him the work of feeding Lord Cobra. The son obeyed his father. He was surprised to find a gold coin in the empty bowl. Greedy designs cropped up in his mind. He thought that the snake must be hiding a bulk of gold in his stomach. If he killed him, he could attain all the gold in one day, and his father then would not have to bother to fetch milk for the snake everyday. So, he stood outside the snake's hole with an axe. When the snake came out to drink the milk, the son chopped his neck off. He slit the snake's stomach open but was disappointed to find it empty. When Bhola returned, he was so angry to learn the truth that he drove his foolish son out of the house.

91 The Nut

Two youngsters were playing in the woods when they found a nut under a nut-tree. "It's mine!" shouted Iqbal. "But I saw it first!" snapped Binoy. "No!" insisted Iqbal, "It was I who picked it up first!" They started quarreling over the nut. Just then, a youth happened to cross by. He heard their bickering and said aloud to them, "Hey guys! I know how to solve your problem!" Then positioning himself between the two of them, he split open the nutshell and said, "Here, half a nutshell for the one who saw the nut first, and the other half for the guy who picked it up first. And I'll keep the rest for the trouble I have taken to fix things up for you!" he added with a chuckle, "that the greater part of the argument end up!"

92 The Woodcutter & the Trees

Shattered with his foster son's betrayal, Ahiqar, a councellor to the Assyrian king, narrated an incident to him when his son came to him repenting. The story began thus- "Once upon a time, a woodcutter went into a forest. He requested the trees, 'I want a handle for my axe which should be made of the best wood. Kindly help me with this.' The trees pondered over the request of the woodcutter and said, 'Look! Do you see that wild Olive Tree in the west—the tallest and greenest of all? He should serve your purpose.' The glad woodcutter headed straight for the Olive Tree and said, 'O you kind and beautiful Olive Tree! The Almighty has blessed you with plenty of wood. If you donate some of it, you will not be any less, but I will have a nice, strong handle for my axe.' The Olive Tree said, 'Come near young man and take as much as you need.' The woodcutter hewed the tree for the required amount of wood. He then thanked the tree and took its leave to finish his axe. Now that the woodcutter had got a perfect handle for his axe, he wished to cut some wood. He went up to the same Olive Tree that had helped him in getting the wood for his axe and started hewing it. The beaten tree said to the woodcutter, 'What fools we trees are. We give you the wood with which you kill us later.' Ahiqar concluded: "My position is exactly that of the olive tree which you hewed being the woodcutter." And Ahiqar left Nadan alone in the room.

93 Two Travellers & some Money

As two travellers journeyed together, one of them spotted a bag. "Look, I've found a bag of money!" "No, don't say I have found it, but we have found it. Remember that we're travelling together." A little while later, they heard that the police were looking for the thieves who had taken a bag of money. "We're undone!" said the man holding the bag. "Do not say we're undone, but I'm undone; for if I'm to have no share of the money, I'll not have any of the punishment."

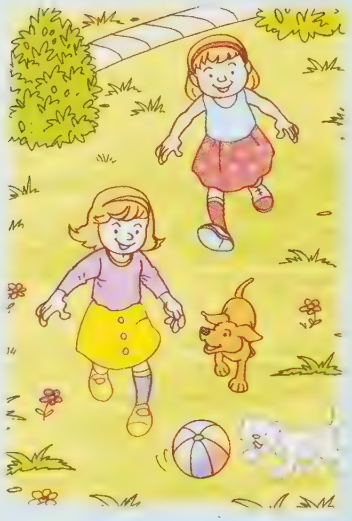
94 Naughty Tim

Mr. Smith lived in a small town with his wife and their three children. Robin, the eldest, was eight years old. Ann was seven and Tim was five years old. They lived in a beautiful house on top of a hill. All around their house were groves of mango and guava trees. The children enjoyed climbing these trees and plucking their fruits. Once, during the mango season, the children were returning home from school as usual. Suddenly, Tim disappeared after leaving his school bag with Robin and Ann. When the two reached home, Tim had not returned. After an hour's wait, their mother's anger changed to worry and fear. She began to cry. Robin thought for a while, then ran out of the house towards the mango trees. He and Ann went on calling out Tim's name till they heard him shout back. "I am up here! Help! I can't get down. I am stuck, help me! I'm very scared." Tim was high up on a branch of a mango tree. His pockets were bursting with ripe, juicy mangoes. They took it with their mother's help to the mango tree and slowly helped Tim come down. When they reached home, their mother scolded Tim.

95 The Accident

Leo adored his baby sister Nina. She was nine months old and Leo was six years of age. When he was away at school, he waited to get back home to play with his sister. Sometimes, Mother let him hold her in his lap. Leo enjoyed taking Nina for a stroll in her pram. Nina loved going out too. There was always a grown-up with them. At the park on the hill, while the elder children played games, the babies were taken out of the prams so that they could play together. One day, as usual, Leo took his sister Nina out in her pram. On their way back, a stray dog shot across the path and Leo lost his balance. He fell down and the pram slipped out of his hand. It went rolling down the road at full speed. Leo was frightened. He cried out for help. A man walking by heard Leo's cries. He ran across the road and, sliding on the ground, stopped the pram by holding its handle. Leo rushed towards Nina. All he was worried about was his little sister, Nina. He ran down the road, followed by the others. He was glad to find Nina safe and sound, smiling as though nothing had happened.

96 Rosemary & her Pets



Six-year-old Rosemary had a kitten, Kitty, and a pup, Scoop. She loved them dearly. Kitty and Scoop also were great friends. One evening, Kitty and Scoop were playing outside and Rosemary was doing her homework inside. Suddenly, she heard Scoop barking badly. Rosemary rushed outside and saw that a big tomcat had caught Kitty by her neck. Rosemary quickly got a bucket of water and threw the water on the tomcat. But the tomcat didn't let poor Kitty go. Rosemary then looked around to find some other weapon. She saw a brick lying in her garden and ran to get it. Seeing the brick, the tomcat dropped Kitty and ran away. Scoop ran after him and nipped him on his back. The big cat darted off into the bushes. Rosemary picked up Kitty and went inside followed by Scoop.

97 Caught in the Rain

Ted and Tia were in their balcony enjoying the rain. They were confused which looked more beautiful: the falling water or the lush yellow mangoes in their orchard. When it stopped raining, the brother and sister decided to climb the trees to pluck some mangoes. Tia climbed a tall mango tree and kept throwing the mangoes down to her brother. Ted also kept piling them up. Soon, Tia realized that she had climbed very high. She didn't know how to get down. Just then, it again began to rain. It was getting dark also. Both the children were afraid. Ted told Tia that he would bring Dad from home. Dad hurriedly grabbed a tall ladder from their backyard and rushed to the tree in which Tia was stuck. "Don't worry, my love. I'm coming up. Just give me your hand. Hold the ladder with the other hand and climb down carefully, one step at a time," said Dad. Tia was on the ground all safe. They all then went inside. Tia rushed into Mum's arms and began to cry. Mum held her close till she felt better.

98 Jim's Lesson

Jim had one bad habit: he liked eating mud! One day, Jim's mother saw that while digging cricket stumps into their courtyard to start playing with his little brother, Jim took some mud out from the holes and put that into his mouth. At once, she made Jim wash his mouth. "Don't ever do that again!" she said. "You have no idea how full of germs a blob of mud is. Come, I show you that." She took a spoonful of mud from one of the holes Jim had dug and put it in a glass of water. She mixed it well. The water turned brownish and some things were floating on the surface. The mother held out the glass to Jim. "Look, these floats are tiny stones and worms in the mud. This is what makes you fall sick so frequently. Now will you eat mud again?" "No, Mother!" Jim said as he looked at the glass in horror. "I'll never do that again."

99 Frank's big Day

Frank so wanted to come along with his elder brother, Fred, for the hang-out but Fred was just not ready. At last, at his friend Sebastian's persuasion, Fred gave consent. Frank danced in joy. At the park, there were other big boys also flying kites. "Can I help launch a kite? Please, please, please!" insisted Frank. "Frank, if you are going to be such a bother, I shall send you back home," Fred said sternly. So, Frank sat down quietly. Sebastian's red kite was up first. It rose with the breeze till it became a red dot in the sky. Then Fred's yellow kite followed. Frank cheered for them. "Fred, you are great!" Frank said proudly. Fred beamed at him and said, "Here, do you want to hold the string for some time?" Frank could hardly believe it. He tugged at the string a few times and the kite rose higher than before. After a while, the boys took a break to eat their snacks. Suddenly Frank shouted, "Fred! Sebastian! Those two boys are stealing our kites!" Hearing Frank shout, the thieves threw the kites on the ground and ran away. Fred and Sebastian patted Frank for saving the fun of the day!

100 Lovely, juicy Mangoes

Julie hailed from an affluent family and had a beautiful room all for herself. But, the room was strangely unkempt. All the warnings given by her mother fell on deaf ears. One afternoon, Julie was to leave for her aunt's place. She wore her favourite white dress for the visit. Meanwhile, Riya, her neighbour's daughter, brought a carton of ripe and juicy mangoes for her. Julie carelessly placed the basket of mangoes on the chair nearest to the door. Then, bidding the girl good-bye she left with her mother. When they returned in the evening, it was quiet late. Entering her room, tired as she was, Julie sat on the chair nearest to door. No sooner had she sat down, than she jumped to her feet in fright, wailing. Her mother came rushing in hearing her cry, only to find Julie had sat splashed on the basket of mangoes ruining her pretty dress completely. Seeing this, her mother got upset and reprimanded Julie on her lazy attitude. Julie realized her mistake and promised her mother to keep the room clean and tidy in future.

101 No more a dark Horse

Both my sisters were quite talented. One was very good at singing and the other at painting. I kept wishing I too had some special talent. My mother understood how I felt and always encouraged me to try out different activities. The day for selections for the annual school ballet was drawing near. I didn't show any interest. Mother tried to coax me to give my name. However, finally, I did. Then one day at my school, my dance teacher informed me- "You have been selected for the show. Would you like to play the lead role?" Back home, Mother and I made a secret pact to not tell my sisters anything about it. The day of the function arrived. My whole family—including my sisters—was in the auditorium. People had already started coming in. After the welcome, our ballet was announced. The lights went out and the curtains were raised. The ballet began. I waited in the wings for my turn to enter. As the minutes ticked by, my palms felt sweaty. With a deep breath, I stepped out of the wings into the spotlight. By and by, the nervousness gave way to joy and my pace quickened to match the pulsating music. I knew I was no more a dark horse. I had finally found a talent.

102 The Turnips

Ramu, a poor farmer, once grew some huge turnips in his farm. The juicy turnips became the talk of the town. Ramu decided to gift a few turnips to the Lord of the town. The nobleman was a kind-hearted person. He was moved by the thoughtful nature of the farmer and rewarded him with three gold coins in return of his three ripe turnips. When a miserly ploughman heard the news, he too planned to gift the nobleman a healthy calf in a bid to extract lavish reward from him. When the ploughman along with his calf reached at the doorstep of the nobleman, he instantly deciphered the real motive behind the miser's visit. The smart nobleman went inside his house. After a while, he turned up with the three turnips in his hand. He handed over the turnips to the nobleman saying that the vegetable is worth more than any riches. The ploughman was left dumbstruck and went back home with a heavy heart.

103 The golden Find

Robin was jerked out of his dreams by the shrill ringing of the doorbell. His friend Bob stood grinning at the door with a huge book tucked under his arm. "Can you guess what my uncle has got me?" he asked Robin. "A book on astronomy?" Robin said yawning. "No," Bob said shaking his head triumphantly. "A book on archaeology!" The boys plunged on the carpet and opened the book. It contained colourful photographs and drawings to explain the work of an archaeologist, the tools needed for digging, and some world-famous excavation sites. Robin's grandmother served the two boys breakfast. Devouring huge quantities of pasta sprinkled with mozzarella, Robin and Bob saw through the window what looked like a depression covered with fresh earth. The boys went out and started digging the spot. Within a few minutes, Bob's spade hit something hard. The boys now dug faster and faster and out came an urn! The boys quickly removed the soil from it. "We'll gift it to your grandmother!" suggested Bob. "Great!!" said Robin. Grandmother was delighted. "Oh, this is mine! My aunt had left this antique Chinese urn for me when she died. It was missing since then..." "You boys are such darlings. You deserve a treat." She went off to the kitchen to prepare a mouth-watering lunch for the boys. "Not a bad start," smiled Robin. "Who knows what we find next."

104 To do or not to do

Thomas lost his father in a road accident. He began working at a restaurant. There he befriended George who was also a waiter. One day, George took Thomas to a side and spoke in a low tone, "Listen, Thomas, do you want to make extra money? All you have to do is deliver a packet. This place is quite near to your house. I will give you the packet. A man named Bill will answer the bell. Just hand it over to him. You will be paid $500 for the job!" Thomas hesitated but then agreed. When Thomas reached the place, Dragon's Blood, an old man opened the door, quickly looked around, grabbed the packet, and banged the door shut at once. It shocked Thomas. Next day, he got his $ 500 as promised by George. A couple of days later, George gave Thomas another packet to deliver. Thomas was again uncomfortable and wanted to know what the packet contained. George said, "Now come on, Thomas, just do it. There's nothing to worry about." So, Thomas was again sent to the same place. This time, a wiry youngster opened the door. He looked at Thomas up and down, and then called out to someone inside, "Here's your pack of saltpetre, sulphur and charcoal." The words struck Thomas's hard. "Oh!" thought Thomas. "That's the mix used for gunpowder." Packet in hand, Thomas ran as fast as he could to the police station. The cops wasted no time. They immediately sent a force to Dragon's Blood and arrested the terrorists.

105 The Instructor

A young man wanted to learn the art of sword fighting. He went to the greatest sword fighter of his land for it. For the first few days, the instructor gave the man many errands to run. He also made him sweep floors, cut vegetables, cook, and clean. But yet, there was no mention of sword fighting. The young man then said to the instructor in all desperation, "Great Master, kindly begin my lessons." The instructor nodded. Next day, when the man was cooking, the instructor came from behind and hit him with a wooden sword and vanished. The man was taken by surprise. Same thing happened again. The man now started defending himself. The pupil was able to dodge the blows! He was very happy with himself. He asked the instructor if he had learnt the art of self-defence. The instructor didn't answer and walked away. The

surprise attacks became frequent, and with it, the man also became more and more skillful in countering them. One day, the man saw the instructor engrossed in some work. He thought, "Now let me attack the instructor unawares." As he quietly went ahead with the same wooden sword to attack the instructor from behind, the instructor quickly caught hold of a shield, turned around, and defended himself well. It was a moment of realization! The man said to his master, "Today I have learnt the real secret of sword fighting. Swinging the sword and learning the opponent's moves are not the essentials of this art. What is important is to read the opponent's mind and to counter his thoughts too. Thank you, Master" And the man continued to take his lessons in all humbleness and went on to become a great sword fighter of his time.

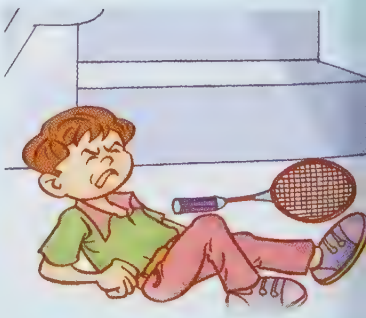
106 Robert's Reward

The Rays were on holiday in Kulu, the gorgeous hill resort of Himachal Pradesh, India. Barry ,Cara and Frank were very happy. While footfalling down a cobbled path leading to a stream, Cara noticed a boy sitting on a rock not too far, engrossed in sketching. She walked up to him and peered over his shoulders. Others also gathered around to admire his sketches. "You sketch fast," remarked Mr. Ray. He picked up a sketch, stared at it for some time, and then said, "Your strokes have a professional touch. How's that?" "My father was a good artist," replied the boy. "He taught me how to sketch." Mrs. Ray asked the boy, "What is your name, son?" "Robert," replied the boy. "My father worked in the fish farm upstream. Now he is no more. I live with my old widow mother who does odd jobs to help our life." Silence followed. But only for a few moments. Mr. Ray entreated Robert, "Would you sketch our whole family?" "Why not!" And Robert began to sketch feverishly. After the sketch was ready, "Your work is really good!" said Mr. Ray. "How much do I pay you for this?" "If it's not asking too much, I'd rather please that you sponsor my studies, Sir," replied Robert. "I want to go to the Arts College." "It's definitely not asking too much," said Mrs Ray. "Yes, you will go to the Arts College," promised Mr. Ray. Barry, Cara and Frank were extremely proud of their parents. Robert's eyes gleamed with tears of joy.

107 Oh! What a Day!

"Ting Tong..." went the doorbell. Rosy skipped to open the door. It was Uncle Ned! Rosy's brother Matt rushed after to give his uncle a big bear hug. There were two other children also present in the house. One was Lorna, Rosy's friend and the other was Jeff, Matt's friend. As there was no adult at home then, Matt and Rosy tried to play the perfect hosts. But Uncle Ned didn't feel like bothering the good kiddies, so he proposed an outing to them. All four children readily agreed. Uncle Ned asked to leave a note before leaving that the children were with Uncle Ned so that no one should get worried. He took the children to a popular boating zone. They sat on clean grass warmed by the sun. The children chatted with Uncle Ned over delicious lunch and boring teachers at their school and their hobbies as well. Then, they picked a six-seater boat and plashed ahead with oars. Uncle Ned complimented the boys for rowing pretty well. He rewarded them with ice-creams for their good job and girls of course don't need a reason to have ice-creams. "Since all good things must come to an end, let's all go home" said Uncle Ned. They got into a taxi for the ride back home.

108 Sid's Fall



"Ouch! My leg...," Sid cried as he fell down the stairs while making an excited rush to play with his buddies. His brother, Julian, ran to inform their mother. She lifted Sid in her arms and took him immediately to the nearest hospital. Julian, who was only six years old, also began to cry to see his brother crying. Mum had to comfort both. The doctor examined Sid. An x-ray was done. "Don't worry. Sid has got a simple sprain" said Dr Frost. "If you take it easy for a while, young man, you will be just fine." Layers of bandage were put around Sid's injured leg. Mum and Julian took Sid very carefully to their apartment. Everyone in the building had already come to know about Sid's fall. His friends came running. He felt special. For next two days, he lay in bed. Mum made him goodies and even got him a hit cartoon film so that he didn't get bored lying. Sid's class teacher also visited him! On the third day, Mum gave him a

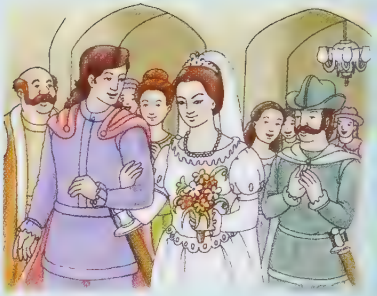
surprise. She had bought him a pair of crutches! The encouraged Sid quickly got out of bed to practise. Next day was Sunday. Mum took Sid down the stairs. Julian was also there. Taking one careful step at a time, they were soon in the park. Sid's friends were happy to see him again. They collected around him. Suddenly, a stray dog came around. The dog ran straight towards little George who stood still, frozen with fright. With all his might, Sid hit the dog with one of his crutches. The dog ran away but Sid lost his balance. Ronny was just in time to save him from falling. Even in this condition, Sid saved George. Sid was lifted up in the air for his bravery and everyone sang- "For he is a jolly good fellow..." When Sid arrived at school the next morning, he was given a hero's welcome.

109 Harry goes to Work

Harry, Ruth's son was a grown-up lad. Ruth made beautiful cane baskets for a living. Every Tuesday, she would sell them at the town fair. The town was quite far. Harry would still be asleep at that time, so she would cook his lunch before she left. Harry did not even cook something for his mother when she returned home, tired and hungry. One day, Ruth fell ill. She knew she would not be able to go to the fair, the next day. "Of course, Harry will have to go to the town," said their old neighbour. When Harry heard his mother, he was scared. "Mother, how can I go to town?" he sulked. "So you can go for the first time now," his old mother insisted. Harry set off, but after a while he felt very tired. The sun set soon and so Harry settled down to rest on the path.

"Hey, young fellow, why are you sleeping in the middle of the path?" said a passer-by shaking Harry by the shoulder. "No, my mother had told me that I should sleep whenever I see the sun set," Harry replied. "But you are in the middle of the path. Get up," said the first man. "No, I will get up only when the sun rises," Harry replied stubbornly. The man hit upon an idea. He lit a fire in a clearing and waited. Suddenly Harry saw the red glow. "Yes, it is time for me to start on my journey. I have to reach town in time for the fair," Harry said and, collecting the baskets and the bundle of food, he set off down the path, in pitch darkness!

110 Shylock

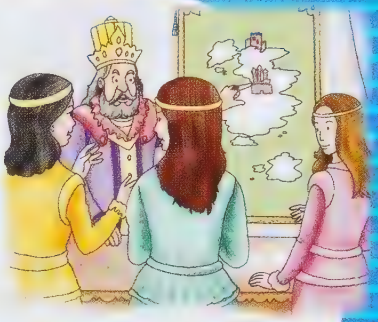


Antonio was a rich Christian merchant in Venice. He hated Shylock because he was a Jew. Antonio also didn't like Shylock's making his debtors pay unreasonable interests. Shylock hated Antonio too. But what really angered him was the way Antonio insulted him in public. Now, it so happened that Antonio's friend Bassanio fell in the need of some money. As Antonio didn't have any money to lend him at that time because all his money had been spent on buying things to send on his trading ships, he told Bassanio to borrow against his name. It was a matter of coincidence that Bassanio went to Shylock for help as he was popular of lending money. When Shylock learnt that Bassanio had come in the name of Antonio, he didn't think twice to consent. After all, why would he not indebt a person who'd rather die than ask a Jew? Shylock made Bassanio sign a contract also as per which Shylock would be allowed to cut one pound of flesh from any of Antonio's body parts that pleased him if he failed to pay the debt on time. A week later at Belmont, Bassanio was marrying Portia at a cathedral when he heard this horrifying news that all the ships of Antonio had been wrecked in the English Channel. This meant that all his wealth was lost and he would not be able to pay back Shylock on time. The news of course worked in favour of Shylock who was long bent on revenge against Antonio. Bassanio went to Shylock and pleaded him to extend the time-limit of the contract. "Why, he has disgraced me always and has hindered me to profits. He has laughed at my losses, made fun of me, scorned my nation and community. And what reason he had to do all this? My being a Jewish! Do Jews not have hands, organs, senses and affections like everyone else? If you prick us, will we not bleed? If you poison us, will we not die? And if you do wrong to us, should we not take revenge? Unlike him, I do have a valid reason to afflict him, and I WILL!" Shylock had finally spoken out. He wanted all the Non-Jewish to know and accept that they too are humans, so what if they belong to a different religion.

111 This Daughter truly loved

King Lear of England was old now and wanted to retire from his domain. He had three daughters: Goneril and Regan, who were already married, and Cordelia, whom the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy both had proposed. Lear decided to distribute the largest share of his property to the daughter who loved him the most. So, he asked each by turns as to how much she loved her father. The cunning Goneril and Regan said that their

father was more valuable to them than anything in the world, though from inside they loved his wealth more. When Cordelia's turn came, she said, "I love Your Majesty according to my duty—no more, no less." Lear, who was blinded by pride, could not see the truth in Cordelia's straight reply. "Away from here!" said the angry Lear. "From now on, you are a stranger to me!" He then divided her share between Goneril and Regan. He called for the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy to know if they were still interested in marrying Cordelia without her portion of the kingdom. The Duke of Burgundy refused but the King of France married Cordelia for her truthfulness. Before leaving, Cordelia begged her sisters to treat their father well. As soon as Cordelia was gone, Goneril and Regan began to show their true colours. Lear was badly treated by them. He could not bear to see the ugliness of his daughters' real faces and went mad. And there was no one to care for him. The Earl of Kent was one of the few men loyal to him. He wrote to Cordelia about her father's condition. Cordelia rushed to England to be with her father. When Lear was brought to her, she kissed and hugged him with tears streaming down her cheeks. "Will you be able to forgive and forget this old and foolish man?" Lear asked Cordelia for he had known which daughter truly loved him. Cordelia cradled her broken-hearted father hoping to cure his madness with her true love.



112 Jupiter, Neptune, Minerva & Momus

The ancient legends of Greece say that: the first man was made by Jupiter, the first bull by Neptune, and the first house by Minerva. After their laborious accomplishments, there rose a dispute as to whose handiwork was the most perfect. Eventually, they three settled for letting Momus—the Greek god of censure and satire—to judge the decision by which they would all have to abide forever. But Momus out of habit got very jealous of the handicraft of each and found fault with all. He first blamed the work of Jupiter because he had placed the heart of man inside, though it should have been outside so that everyone might read its evil developments and might save themselves the intended harm. Then he blamed Neptune because had he made the horns of the bull below his eyes, it would see better where to strike. Lastly, he turned to Minerva and didn't spare her as well of his harsh criticism. He condemned her work asking her why she had not contrived iron wheels in the foundation of her house: Its inhabitants might easily move away if their neighbour proved disagreeable. Jupiter, offended at Momus's incurable faultfinding, drove him from his office of judge and also expelled him from the extents of Olympus.

113 Up in the Mountains

The Roger family decided to go to the mountains during the summer vacations. Mr. and Mrs. Roger and their children Heidi and Eric took the bus early in the morning. The hotel they were to stay in was very lovely. It had a large garden with beautiful flowers blooming. After a piping hot meal, they decided to retire for the day. In the evening, they strolled along the mall, window shopping. Mrs. Roger went in and out of the shops to look for gifts for her family back home. Then Mr. Roger bought them caps that were round and sat flat on the head. The next morning, Mr. Roger asked the hotel manager about some other places they could visit. He was informed about a temple atop another hill. So, they went in that direction. There, Heidi spotted many monkeys. They sat around watching the tourists, waiting to grab some food from them. Eric suddenly felt hungry and he asked his mother for a banana. As he was peeling a banana, a large monkey jumped at him and grabbed the banana from his hand hurting him. Eric screamed with fear and pain. His father quickly took the stick that Eric was carrying and chased the monkeys away. The children were too scared to go further up, so they turned around and walked back to the mall. It had indeed been quite an adventure! One that would take them a long time to forget.

114 The Lamp

A man filled his lamp with lots of oil. He then lit it. The lamp produced very bright light. In its brilliant flaring, the lamp boasted, "People say Sun gives more light. Now ask them to look at me. They will also agree that I give more light." Just then a sudden puff of wind blew and extinguished the lamp. The man lit it again and said, "I hope that hereafter you will not boast any more, but be satisfied with giving your light in silence. Don't forget that even the stars need to be relit."

115 The big Cabbage

Once, two friends, Harry and Jay were passing from a nice little vegetable garden. "Look at that!" exclaimed Jay, "What a beautiful cabbage!" Taking a look at the big fat cabbage, Harry

sneered at it and announced that he had seen much bigger cabbage than the entire garden on one of his trips abroad. Then Jay, a coppersmith, replied, "Gosh! Some cabbage that must have been! But I do remember, Harry, not very long ago, I had to help build copper vessel than was even larger than the village church!" "My goodness!" exclaimed Harry. "Now what on earth was that for?" And Jay retorted, "To boil your cabbage!!" Harry was stunned into silence. He apologised to Jay and promised to overcome his bad habit.

116 The Bird-Catcher & the Blackbird

It was a sunny day. A bird-catcher was setting a snare in his backyard. As he was busy doing it, a blackbird flew past. But the blackbird stopped and turned to look at the bird-catcher. He thought: "What is this man doing so engrossedly with that net-like thing?" To know what the bird-catcher was so occupied in, the blackbird landed on the boundary wall of the backyard and asked the bird-catcher, "Excuse me, Sir. I am humbly sorry for the interruption in your busy time. I was just flying by when I saw you building something. Would you mind telling what it is that you build?" The bird-catcher answered to the blackbird, "You fine bird! I am so pleased to see you. I will definitely tell you what I am doing. Actually, I am laying the foundation of a whole new city. A city that neither you nor any resident of this place would have ever seen: It is going to be that beautiful." The blackbird said, "Wow! You purpose is so noble. But why do you strew these food particles all over your city foundation?" The bird-catcher answered, "My dear bird, this food is to welcome the first entrant in the city." At this, the blackbird requested to the bird-catcher, "Sir, I will really be thankful if allow me to receive this honour first; may I?" "Oh, wonderful! As I told you that whoever enters this new city first will be welcomed with this savoury food. You have seen it first, so you only are rightful to receive the honour. Please take effort in descending from your seat upon the foundation and enjoy the great food," cajoled the bird-catcher. "As soon as the happy blackbird alighted on the net, it was caught." Now the blackbird understood that the city foundation was in fact a trap; and all this while, the bird-catcher was only deceiving it. So the blackbird said to the bird-catcher, "If this is how you build a city, you will hardly have any inhabitants."

117 Meet Shirley, your new Friend

Shirley is a good little witch. There are not that many witches in Shirley's town. In fact, her family is the only witch family in that county. This is Shirley's magic wand. Shirley often uses her magic wand to help her friends. When her friend, Bobby, lost his address book, Shirley found it for him. But sometimes, she helps too much. Like the other day when Emmy was having a fever, Shirley made too many ice cubes. Shirley always says sorry for her mistakes and promises to practice more to perfect her magic. Practice makes a man perfect.

118 Shirley needs a Holiday

One Friday morning, Shirley woke up feeling rather low. On Monday, she had spent a lot of time helping her neighbour, Aunt Dina, with her knitting yarn. On Tuesday, she had her tennis practice and her coach didn't let her use magic during practice. After school on Wednesday, she helped Uncle Nat plant saplings in his huge fruit garden. On Thursday, she did all her homework that was given in the week. "I'm so tired, I need a holiday!" said Shirley to her Mom after she reached home from school on Friday. So her Mom asked her to pack her stuff and she took Shirley to her Grandma's house for a weekend holiday. Shirley didn't do anything the whole of Friday evening and the whole of Saturday morning. But by Saturday noon, she was getting bored and restless. "Grandma, is there anything I can do around here?" she asked Grandma. "But I thought you came here to rest?" Grandma asked her. "But now I'm tired of doing nothing. Doing nothing is boring!" said Shirley. So Shirley spent her remaining weekend helping Grandma around the house and you know what — she did enjoy her holiday more that way.

119 Shirley & the flat Tyre

Shirley and her friends were going on a trip. "Sorry, we can't go! Two tyres are flat and we only have one spare," said the bus driver. They were so disappointed that they couldn't go. "I think I can fix it!" said Shirley. And she took her magic wand out of her bag. "Tyre, tyre, be well again!" said Shirley. The tyre was not flat anymore. But it was not round. It had become a curvilinear triangle! "Oops, sorry. Tyre, tyre, be round again!" This time, the tyre became a pentagon. Shirley took another shot. "Tyre, tyre, be really round!" The tyre became a hexagon! "At least a hexagon looks more like a circle than a curvilinear triangle," said the bus driver. Let me look at my witchcraft book again," said Shirley taking out a thick, strange-looking book from inside her bag. "Aha! I'm sure this is the right spell!" "Tyre, tyre, be round, lose all your points!" said Shirley. "Hurray!" all the children shouted. The tyre had become round. "Thank you, Shirley." "Practice makes perfect!" said Shirley with a sweet smile.

120 Shirley goes babysitting

Shirley had her first baby-sitting job. She was quite confident. Annie was just one year old. She was very cute. Shirley used magic to make Annie's teddy bear clap hands. Instead of getting amused, Annie was shocked. She cried. Shirley changed the colours of Annie's pillow from pink to rainbow colour. Annie cried because she liked her old pillow better. Shirley let Annie ride on her broom. She flew across the room. But the broom bumped into the wall and Annie fell off the broom. Luckily, Shirley was fast enough to catch her so Annie was all right. Shirley ran out of ideas on how to amuse Annie. Annie wandered off and got her blocks out. She started to build towers with them. "After all, playing with ordinary toys is fun. I guess I won't be needing my magic wand today," thought Shirley.

121 Shirley caught a Thief

One night Shirley's Mom and Dad had to go to a convention. "Be careful, Shirley. And don't stay up too late," said Mom. Shirley watched TV but nothing really good was on. Suddenly, she heard noises from outside her room. She saw a man with a mask. He was checking the spaghetti and meatball leftover in the refrigerator. Shirley quietly walked back to her room and quickly called up the police station from there. She took her magic wand and made the flower vase fly in the air. The thief was quite shocked. He almost choked on the meatballs that he had stolen. The thief went to Shirley's Mom's room to look for jewellery. Shirley wrapped him up with Mommy's bed sheet. At that time, the police arrived. Shirley opened the door for them. The police thanked Shirley for catching the thief and took him away.

122 Shirley's bad Hair day

One morning, Shirley woke up feeling bad about her hair. "Mommy, do you think my hair is ugly?" she asked Mom. "Not at all, dear," said Mom. Still Shirley wanted to do something about it. She sat in front of her mirror and took out her magic wand. "Hair, hair, be better!" she said and her hair turned bright maroon! "This is not better at all," she thought. "Hair, hair, be nice!" she said and her hair turned indigo and spiky! This doesn't suit me at all," she said out loud. "Hair, hair, be pretty!" she said and her hair turned magenta and curly. "You look like you can hide coins and stuff inside your hair!" teased Mom. "I guess if I think about it, maybe my own hair is still better," Shirley thought. "Hair, hair, be back to normal!" "Yup, I still like my normal hair better!" said Shirley.

123 Shirley at the Fun Camp

Shirley was going to the little witch and wizard camp. The camp location was in another county. Shirley's Dad drove her there. Many little witches and wizards were already there. Shirley's friend, Suki, who lived in Japan also came. There was one witch with long curly hair who never smiled and was always sitting by herself. Suki told Shirley that the witch, Emily, was very arrogant. During the ice cream eat out, each witch and wizard used his or her magic to change vanilla ice cream into many exotic flavours. Shirley changed hers into bubble gum flavour. Suki changed hers into caramel flavour. In front of Emily, was a very nice multiflavoured ice cream that looked very delicious. But nobody paid attention to her, nobody wanted to try her ice cream. All the witches and wizards were having fun except Emily. She was feeling rather lonely by then. "Can't they tell that I have the tastiest ice cream around here?" she thought gloomily. "Can I try your ice cream?" asked Shirley. "Everybody, try this!" Shirley called the rest. "Good magic is better if you share it," whispered Shirley. Emily nodded and smiled for the first time. After the camp, Emily was not arrogant anymore. She even shared her ice cream spell with everybody.

124 Going to an Orphange

Shirley and her classmates were visiting an orphanage one day. Shirley got an idea. She took out her magic wand and waved it in the air. Suddenly, Shirley and her classmates were all in clown costumes. They put up quite a good show. Everybody enjoyed it. After the show, Shirley wanted to change their costumes back to their original clothes but she couldn't find her magic wand. Everybody helped to look for it. They looked under the chairs, under the table and behind the door, but could not find it. Suddenly the youngest girl crawled to Shirley and pulled something out of Shirley's clown hair. It was her magic wand! To say thank you, she changed them into animal costumes and Shirley and her friends did another show for their friends. Everyone had a good fun.

125 The missing Furniture

Shirley is a good skater. But her friend, Emmy, could not skate. Emmy got a skateboard from her Mom. So Shirley went to Emmy's house to teach her how to skate. Emmy preferred to practise at home. They started to practise but there wasn't much room. "I've got an idea!" said Shirley. She waved her magic wand and said, "Table, table, be small!" And the table became as small as a dollhouse table. Shirley went around making the furniture smaller and they put them in a box. Now they had enough room to practise. Soon Emmy became quite good. "I think you're ready for the park!" said Shirley. "Are you sure?" asked Emmy. "Of course! Let's go!" answered Shirley. Soon Emmy's Mom and Dad came home. They were so shocked to see that all the furniture was missing. They called the police and reported a robbery. When Shirley and Emmy came home, the police were still there. Shirley showed everybody where the furniture was. She put it back again and apologised to Emmy's parents and the policemen.

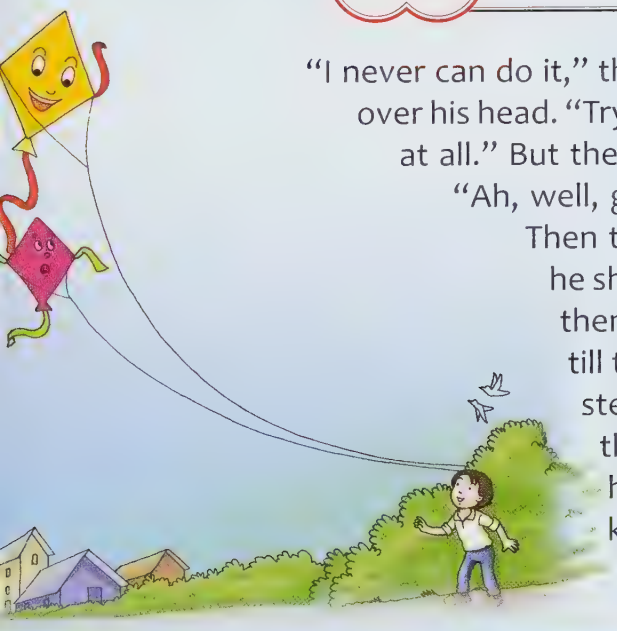
126 Shirley's Cookies

Shirley's Mom is a good baker. Shirley likes it when her Mom bakes something. "I also want to bake something!" said Shirley one day. "I think I'll bake some cookies!" She took the flour, eggs, margarine, sugar and chocolate candies out, too. With the help of her magic wand, Shirley mixed all the ingredients in the bowl. Shirley then shaped the dough into circles and put lots of chocolate candies on each. "Into the oven they go!" said Shirley. After twenty minutes, the cookies were ready. "I think I'll make more," said Shirley. "Mixer, mixer go to work!" "Riiing riiing," the phone rang. It was her friend Suki calling from Japan. They talked for quite a long time and Shirley forgot all about the cookies. When they finished talking, there were a high piles of cookies in the kitchen. "Oh, no! What have I done?" said Shirley. When Mom came home, she was shocked to see the jars of cookies in the kitchen. Mom suggested that Shirley share the cookies with her neighbours and friends. Shirley went around on her bicycle to deliver the cookies. The next morning, everybody at school brought the same things in their lunch boxes—Shirley's cookies!

127 Nothing is impossible to a willing Hand

Beethoven is one of the greatest musicians the world has ever known, yet he was deaf! In spite of this, he wrote the most wonderful music and even conducted an orchestra. And of course, most of us know about Helen Keller, who was blind, deaf and dumb since the time she was a child. But she followed her dream with sheer determination and became an author by the time she was twenty, even earning an honours degree when she was twenty-four! Someone always seems to prove that the impossible is indeed possible. All that is needed is a willing hand. Just think – could a weak old man with poor eyesight, dressed in simple cotton clothes, challenge the world's greatest power, and win without firing a single shot? Impossible, you say. But that is exactly what Mahatma Gandhi did! So success in any field depends on our will to conquer that field. Which means three things: first, we must have a clear idea of what we want to achieve; second, we must believe we can achieve it; and third, we must start doing it – Now! For the willing hand, there is no tomorrow – only today; no later – only now.

128 The brave little Kite

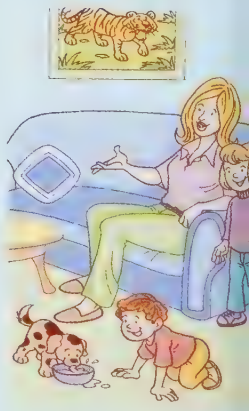


"I never can do it," the little kite said, As he looked around at the others high over his head. "Try," said the big kite, "only try! Or I fear you never will learn at all." But the little kite said, "I'm afraid I'll fall." The big kite nodded: "Ah, well, goodbye; I'm off," and he rose toward the tranquil sky. Then the little kite's paper stirred at the sight, And trembling he shook himself free for flight. First whirling and frightened, then braver grown, Up, up he rose through the air alone, till the big kite looking down could see the little one rising steadily. While far below he could see the ground, and the boys like small spots moving round. They rested high in the quiet air. "Oh, how happy I am!" the little kite cried, "And all because I was brave, and tried."

129 The Rainbow

It was raining and Jacob was enjoying it from the window of his house. When it stopped, there appeared a rainbow arching in the sky. Jacob was thrilled. He had never seen a rainbow before in real. He called his grandpa who was in the garden. "Look, Grandpa, that rainbow! O it's so beautiful! I have never seen such lovely colours before! Look, it's touching the ground there. I will go down there and fill its colours in a box. I will show it to my friends!" Before grandpa could explain Jacob, he was fast gone. As he reached the spot, the rainbow was nowhere to be found. The heartbroken Jacob returned home crying. "Why are crying, son?" asked grandpa. "Grandpa, when I went there, there was no rainbow, no colours." Grandpa smiled and said, "That is what a rainbow is. It appears after every rain but only for a very short while, then it is all gone until the next rain. And you may only enjoy seeing its beautiful colours but can never touch them. Rainbow is like all those beautiful things in life which have a time-limit. We can't keep them forever. After their limit, they leave us forever. Will you remember this, Jacob?" "Yes, Grandpa."

130 Noddy, the Bundle of Joy



Beth and Dan were curiously waiting for their mother to return from work in the evening because she had promised them a surprise gift in the morning. As mother arrived, "Mamma, what surprise gift have you brought for us!?" the children asked glowingly. The mother removed the cover of the basket she was carrying. "A puppy!!" Beth and Dan said joyfully. "Oh, Mamma, thank you so much for such a lovely gift," When father also arrived, they all sat together and thought of a name for the new family member. They decided to name him Noddy. From that day onwards, wherever Beth and Dan went, Noddy followed. One day, Beth and Dan were cleaning up their cupboard on the order of their mother. Noddy was eager to help too. When naughty Noddy jumped all over the clothes, Dan scolded him. At lunch, Dan asked the mother where was Noddy. "I haven't seen him for quite a while." "I have not seen him either," the mother replied. "He can't sit quiet for so long," Beth said. They all got worried. After washing their hands, they started calling out for Noddy. But they heard no bark in reply. Beth was scared now. Dan searched behind and beneath every part of the house. Suddenly, they heard a soft bark and a scraping noise. They traced the sound. It was coming from the cupboard. Dan opened the cupboard and out jumped Noddy! He had crept into the cupboard when the children were cleaning it up, and got shut.

131 The Aquarium

There was a stream near Tom and Jack's house. Tom and Jack spent hours by the stream, watching the fish and trying to catch them. "I wish we had a fish bowl at home," said Jack. "A big water jug would also do," suggested Tom. Jack quickly and quietly went to the dining room and fetched the large water jug. Tom waded in the water and caught many tiny black fish. He then waded out and dropped the fish from his net into the jug, carefully held by Jack. The two boys went inside happily with their achievement. "Jack! Tom! What have you two been up to?" their mother asked as they walked in with their feet wet and dirty. Tom held out the jug and said, "We're making an aquarium, Mummy. See!" "From where? The stream! Oh no! Go upstairs and wash up at once. That water is so dirty!" ordered the mother. The boys crept upstairs with the jug. They cleaned up fast, and sat and watched the fish as they swam about in the water jug. When their father was back, Jack proudly showed him also their self-made aquarium. The father laughed. "I don't think your fish will live long in a jug. They need the same plants and water they are used to. They might die without them." After lunch, the boys hurried to their room. "Oh no, Tom!" Jack said looking at their aquarium. A few of the fish were floating dead and the rest were gasping for breath. "Tom, they are dying!" The father rushed in when he heard Jack's cry. "Go and put them back into the stream at once," said the father. "You must never remove any creature from its natural home." Sadly, the two boys carried the jug back to the stream and poured the fish back in. Tom suddenly said, "Jack, can't this stream be our aquarium? Our secret super-aquarium!" Jack's sad face smiled.

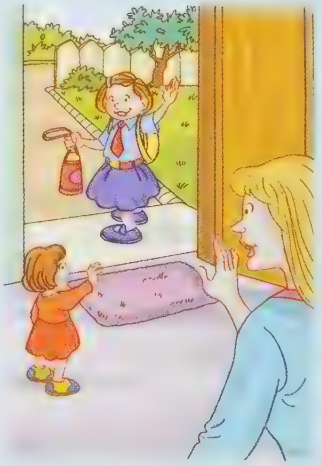
132 The Pot of Gold from the Rainbow

Finally the spring is here, the sky was painted with the colourful rainbow. Leena was marveling the beauty of the sight from her window. Suddenly, she sprang from her pensive mood and ran to her mother. She feverishly asked her mother if she was born on a Sunday to find the pot of gold that falls from the heaven whenever the rainbow appears. Leena's mother lovingly stroked her hair and said, "Well dear, no doubt there exist a heavenly treasure, but you do not have to be born on a Sunday in order to possess that treasure. What is important is your behaviour towards others. Be your best always and everywhere. If you will be such a child, you too will possess that treasure!" With time, Leena grew up to be a well-behaved and happy girl.

133 Anna runs away

Anna's baby sister tore her new book. "No! You've torn my new book!" Anna yelled at the baby snatching the book away. The baby started crying. Their mother came out of the kitchen. "Anna, it was very bad of you to make the baby cry." "But, Mamma, she has torn my NEW BOOK!" "She's only a baby, Anna, and doesn't know what is right or wrong. Try to be patient with her." Anna ran out of the room crying. "Mamma doesn't love me any more." She went into her room, threw herself on her bed, and cried bitterly. "I'll run away." She packed a few things in her school bag. She took her pink party dress, her toothbrush, her comb, her favourite doll as well. She swung the bag on her back and tiptoed out of her room, down the driveway, and out of the gate. She walked till the end of the road and stopped. She felt like turning back and going home. She saw some children playing in the park. She felt tearful but decided not to cry. She wondered if her mother was worried. Anna stepped in the park and fell asleep watching the children playing. When she woke up, it was dark and she was all alone in the park. She was afraid. She ran towards the park gate. She was very scared now. When out of the park, she saw some street lights. She felt a little better. She began walking quickly towards her house. Finally, she reached home. The front door was open and she could hear her mother's anxious voice. "Mamma!" Anna said advancing. She could not say a word more as she had started crying. Her mother dropped the telephone and hugged Anna like never before.

134 Where is Jane?



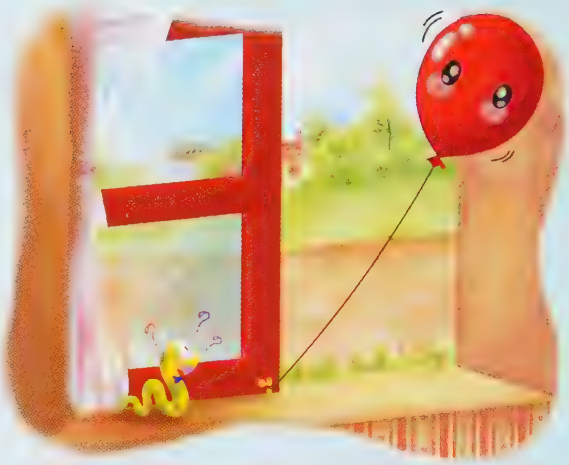
Jane was six years old. She had a younger sister who was three. Her name was Nancy. Nancy loved her elder sister and followed her wherever she went. Nancy did not like it when Jane had to go to school. One day, Jane was getting ready for school. Her mother helped her get dressed, packed her lunch and filled her colourful water bottle. The children formed queues and went to the assembly hall for prayers. After that they went back to their classrooms. Soon the bell rang again and it was time to go home. Jane got into her bus and took a window

seat. As the bus set off, its rocking movement made her feel sleepy. At the bus stop, Mother was waiting with Nancy. The bus arrived and stopped. The children got off and the bus moved on. Jane had not got out of the bus. Mother rushed back home. When she rang up the school, she was told that Jane had got into the bus. Mother rang up Jane's father and told him what had happened. Little Nancy began to cry. Her grandmother tried to quieten her. When Jane's parents reached the school, they went to the office. The principal informed them that the buses were parked at the back of the school. The conductor was still in Jane's bus. In the last seat, they found Jane fast asleep! Jane's father quickly lifted her up while her mother collected her school bag and water bottle. When they reached home, Grandmother and Nancy were waiting at their gate. As soon as Jane got out of the car, they rushed out and hugged her.

135 Here comes Santa Claus!

It was Christmas Eve! Alice was exuberant. It is the day when Santa Claus makes visits! Alice loved his red costume and his flowing milky-white beard. Ivan, her brother, entered the house juggling his football. Both the children got ready for dinner. "Our Christmas tree is looking so beautiful!" said Alice. Soon the guests began to pour in. Everyone enjoyed the delicious meal. Afterwards, the father played the guitar and everyone joined in to sing Christmas carols. It was time now for the guests to leave. Everyone wished each other 'Merry Christmas'. "It is far too late to be awake. Off to bed, children, both of you," ordered the father. In her room, Alice decided to stay awake all night and wait for Santa. After a little while, the whole house went quiet. Alice heard the sound of a light being switched on. She threw her blanket aside and slowly tiptoed out and down the stairs. The drawing room was lit. Alice was sure it was Santa. But she got a shock of her life when she saw who was placing all the presents under the Christmas tree. No, it was not Santa. It was her mother and father! The mother and father got very upset. How could they tell Alice that every year they were the ones who had been putting the presents under the Christmas tree, and not Santa Claus? The mother went to Alice and picked her up in her arms. She sat down on a chair and rocked her. "So, there is no Santa Claus?" Alice asked sobbing. "Of course there is, and he will come!" the mother said with a mysterious smile. "But we wanted to give you presents too because we love you. Will you go to sleep now?" Alice nodded. Perhaps Santa would come later...!

136 Wooly & the red Balloon



Thomas and his sister Tiny just got back from a carnival. Tiny brought home a red balloon. Wooly had never seen a balloon before. When Tiny went out to have her snack, she left the balloon in the bedroom. Wooly slowly crept towards the balloon, then climbed up the string... onto the balloon. Suddenly, the balloon flew out of the window. Wooly saw Thomas' house getting smaller and smaller as he flew higher and higher. He met a bird. Both shocked. Wooly flew through the clouds. He was enjoying himself. But then he started to miss Thomas. He wondered if he would meet him again. Suddenly, he saw Thomas and Tiny down below. They were pointing at the balloon. Thomas and Tiny ran after the balloon. The balloon got stuck on a tree and Thomas climbed to get it. Tiny brought it back to the bedroom, and this time she tied up the string tightly. Wooly enjoyed his balloon adventure, but he was sure glad that he was back home with Woosy, Tiny and Thomas.

137 Wooly the Airplane Pilot

Wooly looked great in his helmet. The engine started..... and the airplane flew high into the sky. "Yippeee," said Wooly, "I, Wooly the Pilot, am flying." Suddenly the engine coughed! "Aaaahhh...," shouted Wooly. "Wooly, wake up," said Woosy. "Thank God, it was just a dream," said Wooly. He told Woosy all about his dream. "Wooly, butterflies fly. We, worms, don't fly," said Woosy. Suddenly Thomas came in. "Come with me, Wooly," he said. Thomas took Wooly to the park...and he took out a toy plane from his bag. He put Wooly on the plane and flew it. "Yippeee," said Wooly. "It's just like in my dream," said Wooly.

138 Wooly & the Birthday Cake

It was Thomas' birthday. His Mom was making a cake for him. The cake was round with blue frosting and red cherries. Very pretty. "Oops, I forgot to get the candles," said Thomas' Mom and she went out to buy some. Wooly crept up onto the table towards the cake. He sniffed the cake and tasted the frosting. He loved it. He crept over the side of the cake, eating the frosting. "Wooly, what are you doing? Don't finish it up!" said Woosy.. But Wooly ignored her. Soon all the frosting was gone... and Wooly was full. When Mom came home, she was confused when she saw the cake. "I'm sure I frosted the cake," she said. Mom had to frost the cake all over again. When the party began, Wooly was, feeling sick, so he couldn't join it. Wooly could only watch. He knew it was his own fault. He shouldn't have finished the frosting. Thank God! Thomas saved an apple for him.

139 Wooly finds a Friend

Wooly is Thomas's pet worm. He lives in a cozy box in Thomas' room. He loves Thomas. Thomas loves him too. But Wooly feels lonely when Thomas goes to school. So one day, Wooly decided to look for another friend. He wandered into the kitchen and saw something that looked like a yellow worm. "Hi, I'm Wooly," he said. But the yellow thing was quiet. "What a snobbish worm," he thought. Then he went to the shoe shelf and saw a colourful worm sleeping on Thomas's sister's shoes. "Hi, I'm Wooly," he said. But the colourful thing kept on sleeping. "What a lazy worm," he thought and moved away. Near a hole, he saw a gray worm. "Hi, friend. I'm Woo..." He hadn't finished saying his name when the worm ran away very fast. "What a fast little worm!" he said out loud, "Maybe he is busy."On Thomas's desk, he saw a very stiff-looking worm! "Hi, I'm Wooly. Let's play," he said. But the worm didn't move. "Oops! I think this is just a statue. Not a real worm," he said. Outside the window, he saw a very pretty worm. "Hi. I'm Wooly. Would you like to be my friend? What's your name?" asked Wooly. "I'd love to be your friend, Wooly. But I don't have a name," said the worm."Never mind. Let's play at my place," said Wooly. "Look, Mom! Wooly has a friend. I think I'll call her Woosy," said Thomas. So Woosy got her name, and Wooly finally got a friend. He never felt lonely again.

140 Wooly & the Refrigerator

It hadn't rained for many days and the weather was quite hot. He saw Thomas taking a ice lolly from the refrigerator. Wooly was curious. When Thomas' sister, Tiny, opened the refrigerator, Wooly quickly went inside. But when Tiny closed the refrigerator door, it became dark. He wandered around and found a plate of jelly pudding. He found an apple. He nibbled on it a little bit. He found a bowl of spaghetti. He ate the meatball. "Burp.... Oops." "Where is that ice lolly?" he thought. He crept higher and higher. He found the ice lolly at last! He started licking it but it was very very cold. Wooly started to shiver. Thank God Mom opened the refrigerator. Wooly quickly got out.

141 Wooly goes sailing

One day, Wooly was walking in the garden. He found Thomas' toy boat floating in the pond. "I think it's a good time to go sailing," he thought and he climbed onto the boat. The boat started to rock as the wind blew and made some waves. Then came the rain. Wooly was drenched. Wooly held on tight to the mast when some big waves came again. "Oh no! A submarine!" shouted Wooly. "Thank God the marine officer steered it away on time!" he thought. Wooly survived a few more big waves. Some water got inside his boat. Luckily the boat didn't topple over. Finally, he reached the other side of the pond. The sun had come out and there was a beautiful rainbow. Wooly enjoyed the trip. "I'll sail again soon," he thought.

142 Wooly's fun Holiday

During school holidays, Thomas' family went on a vacation. Wooly and Woosy came, too. They stayed in a nice hotel. Outside, wooly saw a very interesting button near the door. He pressed it. "Riiing." "Wooly, stop playing with the bell," said Thomas. He went to the next door and pressed the bell, "Riiiing." An old lady opened the door. She was confused to see no one there. Wooly giggled. Wooly went to another door and pressed the bell again. He went to another door. The bell was a bit cracked. But he pressed it anyway. "Riiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiing...." This time his tail was stuck in the crack and the bell kept on ringing. A lady went out to check. She was so shocked to see a worm on her bell. Luckily Thomas was already there. Thomas slowly took Wooly out of the crack and apologized to the lady. Wooly realized he shouldn't play pranks on people anymore.

143 Wooly & the Apple Monster

Wooly loves apples. Sometimes he doesn't want to share the apples with Woosy. One day, he was starting to nibble on a new red juicy apple... when suddenly the apple opened his eyes and shouted at him. Wooly was shocked. Wooly ran around the room with the Apple Monster chasing after him. Help... Help," he shouted. "Wooly, wake up," said Woosy. "I just had a nightmare!" said Wooly and he told Woosy all about it. That evening, Wooly found a big red juicy apple. "I will eat it before Woosy sees it," he thought, grinning. But when he was about to bite into it, he was shocked to see that the apple had eyes. Woosy laughed. "Gotcha!" said she. It turned out that Woosy had put the paper eyes there to tease Wooly. Wooly was angry. But then he realized that he had been greedy all this time.

144 Wooly finds a Hobby

Thomas has quite a few hobbies. He skates on roller blades, he swims, and he plays chess. Wooly also wants to have a hobby. He tried swimming, but he nearly drowned. Thank God Woosy saved him! Wooly tried to paint. He was quite good at it. But his skin was allergic to the paint. He tried playing chess. But the chess pieces were too heavy for him. He tried reading books. "If I'm good at reading, I can become a book worm," he thought. But he got quite tired running from one side of the book to the other over and over again. So he started to feel low. "There is nothing I can do!" One day, Thomas put a rope in Wooly's home. And Wooly picked up tight rope walking. He could do it standing above or underneath the rope. He could do it upside down, too. So, Wooly finally found a hobby. He was very proud of it.

145 A Surprise for Wooly

One day, Wooly was quite bored being alone. "I wonder where Woosy is," he thought. He found Woosy carrying a heavy bag. "Hi, Woosy, what are you up to?" asked Wooly. "Oh... nothing. See you later, bye," said Woosy. "Let me help you with the bag!" said Wooly. "No, thanks!" she said. "Strange!!"wondered Wooly. Then he saw Thomas. He crept up to him. "Sorry, Wooly, can't play with you now," said Thomas and walked away. Then Wooly went to Tiny. "Not now, Wooly. I'm very busy!" said Tiny and walked away. "Why is everybody in such a hurry?" thought Wooly. Then he went to Thomas' Mom. "Wooly, what are you doing here? Go back to your box!" said Thomas' Mom. Wooly was sad. "My friends don't love me anymore," he thought. Suddenly Thomas picked him up, covered his eyes, and brought him in to the kitchen. "Surprise! Happy Birthday, Wooly!" said everybody. Wooly didn't even remember that it was his birthday. On the table, he saw apples of different sizes and colours. "I guess they do love me very much," thought Wooly happily.

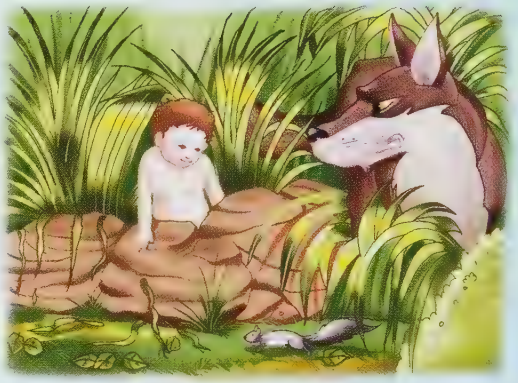
146 Wooly gets lost

One day, Wooly woke up from his nap and found himself in a dark place. "Where am I?" wondered he. He was quite scared. He bumped into something hard. "Oops! maybe it's the wall," he thought. Soon his eyes got accustomed to the dark. He saw a pen and some keys. Then everything moved. "Oh no! It feels like an earthquake," thought he. He quickly got away from the keys and pens in order not to get hurt. He tried to creep up but he kept falling down. After some time, the movements stopped. He again tried to find his way out. He got lost amidst some sheets of paper and notepads. Then he saw a speck of light. He crept upwards and sideways...and upwards again, closer and closer to the light. Finally, he found his way out—from Dad's bag. He saw Thomas running towards him. "You're home early today, Dad," said Thomas. Wooly crept back into his box. "Thank God I'm back home," he said as he lay down on his sling.

147 Wooly & Grandma's Sweater

Thomas's grandma came to visit over the weekend. Wooly noticed many interesting things in her suitcase. There was a bottle of sweet-smelling liquid and a round box of nice-smelling powder. "Yippee! it's like playing in the snow," said Wooly. He found a ball of yarn. He almost lost his way inside. Thank God he could get out! Then, he fell asleep on grandma's warm sweater. When grandma came looking for her sweater, she was shocked to see Wooly. "Help!" shouted grandma, "There is a worm!" Wooly woke up and hid inside the sweater out of fear. Thomas came and saw Wooly. "It's just Wooly, Grandma," he said. "It seems that he likes your sweater." But grandma didn't want a worm sleeping in her sweater so she made Wooly a sweater. Wooly just loves his sweater.

148 Mother Wolf & her Man-Cub



It was late afternoon. Father Wolf awoke from his sleep, yawned, and stretched his legs. He pushed out his claws and looked at them. It was time to go hunting for food. Mother Wolf sat watching her four cubs playing and tumbling around her. Suddenly, her ears stood up, and she stretched her neck. She could hear the leaves rustling. She asked Father Wolf, "What is there?" He went to the mouth of the cave and looked out. From between the leaves, he could see a naked baby boy crawling towards the cave, laughing. "Why, it's a man-cub!" exclaimed he. "A man-cub? Bring him here. I have never seen a man-cub before," said Mother Wolf. Father Wolf gently picked up the child by the neck with his teeth and put the child in front of her. "He has no hair! He is naked!" exclaimed Mother Wolf. "Look at him. He is not afraid. He is pushing my cubs away to get my milk!" Suddenly, they heard Sher Khan's growl outside the cave. "What do you want?" asked Father Wolf. "The man-cub!" answered Sher Khan. "I saw him crawl this way." "Go away, he is mine!" Mother Wolf sprang up. "He will live with us," she said. "He shall not be killed. One day he will hunt and kill you." Sher Khan knew she would not give him the man-cub. So he left. Mother Wolf looked at the child fondly. "I'll name him Mowgli." Mowgli crawled up to her and lay down at her side. Mother Wolf smiled and put her paw over him.

149 Baloo & Bagheera

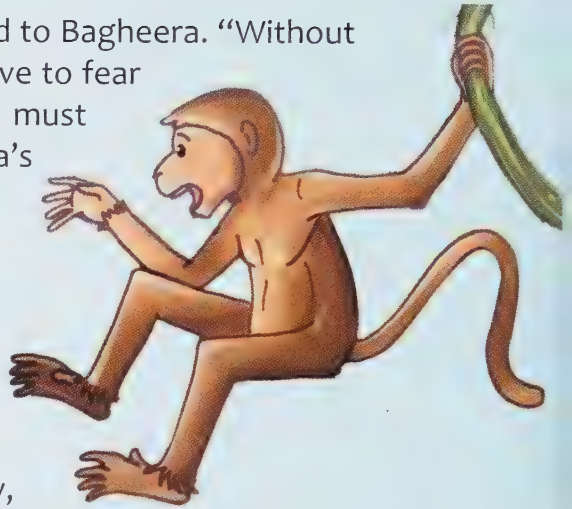
At one full moon night, the wolf pack met at the Council Rock. Akela, the leader of the pack, sat on the Rock and watched the wolves bring their young cubs. This was the Law. The older wolves were required to see each new cub before it became a member of the pack. Mother Wolf also brought her four cubs and Mowgli. She was filled with anxiety as to whether they would allow a man-cub in or not. Akela ordered to bring the cubs to the centre. One by one the older wolves came, sniffed each one, looked carefully, and then returned to their places. Father Wolf

now pushed Mowgli into the centre. Mother Wolf was very worried as she looked on. Mowgli was laughing and rolling the stones he had found. He was too busy playing to be afraid. A growl came from behind a rock. It was Sher Khan. "You are wolves. What will you do with a man-cub?" A young wolf asked, "Why do we have a man-cub here? He is not one of us." "I know," said Akela, "but if two of the pack speak for him, he may stay." Father and Mother Wolf looked around and waited. They were not allowed to speak for him. No one spoke. Suddenly, they heard a grunt. It was Baloo, the brown bear. He was the teacher of the wolf cubs. He taught them the Laws of the Jungle. He said, "I speak for the man-cub." "But we need one more," said Akela. A soft voice purred, "Count me second" It was Bagheera, the black panther. "I speak for the man-cub. Now let him stay. "Of course the man-cub can stay!" Cheered Akela. Sher Khan was very angry.

150 Baloo teaches Mowgli

Mowgli had a wonderful time among the wolves for ten whole summers. He loved Father and Mother Wolf. They in turn loved him as one of their cubs. Their cubs were his brothers, and they all played together. Father Wolf taught him many things about the jungle: its sounds and dangers. Mowgli roamed the jungle and swam in the jungle pool when he felt hot, or when he wanted to wash himself. Baloo taught him the Laws of the Jungle and the Hunting Verse: "Feet that make no noise, eyes that can see in the dark, ears that can hear the winds, and sharp white teeth—all these are the marks of our brothers." Baloo also taught him the Wood and Water Laws: how to tell when a branch was rotten or strong before climbing it, how to speak politely to bees if he came upon a hive, and how to warn the water beasts before he dived into pools. Mowgli was also taught the calls of all the creatures living in the jungle. These would be of use to him when he was in danger and had to seek their help. Sometimes, Mowgli would get tired of learning so many things and would not listen to Baloo. Then Baloo would cuff him. Bagheera frequently sat nearby and loved watching Baloo and Mowgli. One day, when Baloo cuffed Mowgli, he ran off and hid behind a tree. He was very angry. Bagheera said to Baloo, "Why do you cuff him so much? He is very young." "Not too young to get killed," replied Baloo. "A cuff from me is better than that, isn't it?"

151 Mowgli & the Monkey Troop



"See how well Mowgli has learnt everything," Baloo said to Bagheera. "Without my cuffs, he would not have learnt. Now he does not have to fear anybody." "Of course he has to," replied Bagheera. "He must fear man, his own tribe." Mowgli was jumping on Bagheera's back, pulling and pushing him. "What is the matter, Little Brother?" asked Bagheera."One day, I will have a tribe of my own," Mowgli said proudly. "I shall be its leader. Baloo and Bagheera were shocked. "What are you talking about?" asked Baloo, very angry. Mowgli was surprised. He looked at Bagheera and saw that he was angry too. Have you been with the monkey troop?" "They have no law and eat everything," added Bagheera. Mowgli said. "One day, when Baloo had cuffed me, I went far in the jungle and met the monkey troop. They were very good to me and gave me nuts and many other things to eat. They carried me from tree to tree. It was wonderful. They said that I was their brother without a tail. They even said that they would make me their leader one day." Baloo was furious. "They are liars," shouted he. "You shall not meet them again." "But why not?" Mowgli wanted to know. "Listen to me, man-cub," said Baloo sternly. "I have taught you the laws of the jungle and the calls of all the creatures that live here. The only thing I have not taught you is about the monkey troop. Why? It is because they have no law and no call. They chatter all the time, living on the branches. We, of the jungle, do not go where they go, or drink water from the same waterhole. You, too, will do the same." Mowgli had never seen Baloo so angry, so he nodded. Suddenly nuts and sticks hit them on their heads. Mowgli looked up and saw many chattering monkeys swinging from branch to branch.

152 The Monkey Troop kidnaps Mowgli

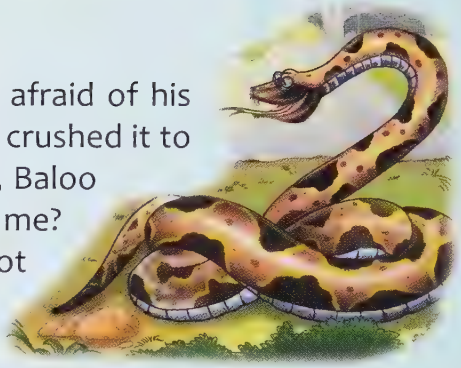
The monkey troop was exactly as Baloo had said. The animals of the jungle met them and kept away from them. But the monkey troop had watched Mowgli weaving mats with straw and sticks. They found that wonderful. They thought that they could learn many things from him, and this would make them wise. Then all the creatures of the jungle would envy them.

They decided to carry him away and make him their leader. So one day, when Mowgli was sleeping, the monkey troop swooped down from the trees and carried him off. Mowgli opened his eyes and found that he was being carried away through the trees. He cried out aloud. Baloo and Bagheera woke up and were horrified to see the monkey troop carrying their Little Brother away. Mowgli felt dizzy as he was swung from branch to branch. He looked up and saw Cheel, the kite, flying over him. He gave Cheel a call for help. Cheel was surprised to hear a man-cub say the Master Word! Mowgli called out to him saying, "We are of one blood, you and I. Mark my trail. Tell Baloo and Bagheera. Go quickly." The monkeys carried him to the place the jungle creatures called the Cold Lairs. It was an old, ruined city, with its walls crumbling down. The monkeys lived here. No jungle creature ever came here.

153 Cheel, Baloo & Bagheera

Baloo and Bagheera were filled with grief. Bagheera to Baloo, "You have taught him many things, but not all. You did not tell him about the silly, chattering monkey troop. They could drop him while carrying him over the trees. He will surely die from such a fall." Baloo was too woeful to reply. Cheel spotted them as he flew over. He gave them Mowgli's message. "What is the use?" wailed Baloo. "He may be dead by now." Baloo," comforted Bagheera. "The monkeys will be careful because they want him. Also, the man-cub is wise and well-taught. But as long as he is with them, he is not safe." "Oh, I am such a fat, stupid fool!" wailed Baloo again. "Bagheera, the monkey troop fears Kaa, the snake, because he can climb trees and steals young monkeys in the night." He is a cunning old creature. Better still, he is always hungry," said Baloo. "Come, we'll go and seek his help. If he helps, we will promise him many goats." Both of them set off to look for Kaa. They found him basking in the sun. His new coat was shining in the sun.

154 Kaa a huge powerful Snake



Kaa was a very big snake. Every creature in the jungle was afraid of his strength. Once, he caught an animal and got it in his coils, he crushed it to death and then swallowed it. Kaa was hungry. He said, "Hello, Baloo and Bagheera. What are you doing here? Any news of food for me? I am very hungry." "We are hunting," answered Baloo. He did not want Kaa to know that they had come to seek his help. Kaa would never let them forget that. "I'll come with you," said Kaa eagerly. "The last time I climbed a tree, it was dry and rotten and I nearly fell to my death. The monkey troop were there, and they called me such bad names." "Oh, the monkey troop are shameless," said Bagheera. "I once heard them say that you were old and had lost all your teeth." Kaa's long body wriggled in anger. Baloo added. "Actually, it's the monkey troop we are looking for." "Why?" "They have taken away our man-cub." "Man-cub? I have heard of him." "Yes, Kaa, the man-cub. He is the best of my pupils," boasted Baloo. "The monkey troop fear me," said Kaa. I may be of help. Where did you say they had taken the man-cub?" "To the Cold Lairs! I am going as fast as I can," said Bagheera, and then asked, "Kaa, will you come along?" "Of course I will," said Kaa, ready to set off. "Though I have no feet, yet I can go as fast as you can." "Baloo, you follow us," said Bagheera. Baloo was big and heavy, hence could not move fast.

155 Mowgli in Cold Lairs

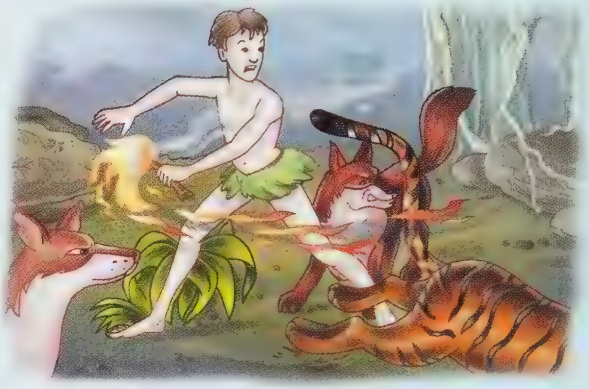
Baloo, Bageera and Kaa knew the place Cold Lairs. The ruined palace was on top of a hill. The monkeys liked this place because no jungle creature ever came here, and there was a water tank. This was their drinking hole and their bathing place too. Hundreds of them lived in the Cold Lairs. The monkey troop brought Mowgli to this place. There was great rejoicing when the other monkeys saw him. Now they could learn many things from him and become wise. Mowgli was terrified to see so many monkeys chattering around him. He

anyhow wanted to get away from this horrible place. From the corner of his eye, he noticed Bagheera climbing up the broken walls. The monkeys saw him too. Chattering loudly, hundreds of them jumped at him. Bagheera tried to beat them back. "Bagheera, run to the water-tank," cried Mowgli. "Quick!" Bagheera jumped into the water tank. The monkeys fell away angrily. Then they saw Kaa, wriggling up the wall towards them. The monkeys screamed, "Run! Run! It's Kaa!" They went berserk. Kaa said to Bagheera, "Take the man-cub and leave. I will take care of them." Baloo also came lumbering up, heaving and panting. Mowgli was glad to see his friends again. Bagheera said, "Hurry, Mowgli, we must leave at once, while the monkeys are held by Kaa."

156 The red Flower

Mowgli was now ten-year-old. Baloo and Bagheera decided that it was time for Mowgli to go to the man village that was on the edge of the jungle. The jungle was not safe for him. Sher Khan continued to hunt for him. He had vowed that he would get him one day. He knew that Akela was getting old and soon a new, young wolf would become the leader. So Sher Khan devised a plan. He began to spend more and more time with the young wolf pack, making them believe that he was their friend. "What do you have to do with a man-cub?" Sher Khan would ask them. "He is not one of you." And the young wolves began to agree with him. Bagheera heard all this. He was afraid that the young wolves would drive Mowgli out of the pack when the time came to choose a new leader. One day, he spoke to the boy about this. Mowgli did not believe him. Bagheera explained Mowgli, why do you forget that you are a man-cub? The creatures of the jungle hate man because they fear him. Some of the wolf pack already hate you. Sher Khan has made sure of that. "What shall I do?" Mowgli asked. "Go to the village and bring the red flower. Then all the wolves, no, all the creatures of the jungle will fear you." Mowgli knew the red flower. It was the fire around which the villagers sat on winter nights, or which they carried with them in small pots on cold days when they took their cattle to graze. It was true that all the creatures of the jungle feared it, but Mowgli didn't.

157 Mowgli takes a Pledge



Mowgli set off towards the village. A young girl had just come out of the village gate with a pot of fire. Mowgli raced down the hill, snatched the pot away from the girl, and disappeared into the jungle. The girl screamed and ran back into the village. Bagheera was waiting for him. "Quickly feed it with dry sticks," he said. "That is what they do in the village." Mowgli collected a pile of dry sticks and kept feeding the fire. He carried the red flower, as Bagheera called it, to the Council Rock. Sher Khan was already there. Mowgli asked the wolf pack, "Are you going to make a tiger your leader? Is he one of you?" "You too are not one of us," shouted a young wolf. "Then why are you with our pack?" "Leave the man-cub to me," growled Sher Khan. A burning stick from his pot of fire and waved it around. He laughed out loudly when he saw Sher Khan jump up and run behind a rock. "Have you seen how brave your Sher Khan is?" he asked the pack. The wolves too were trying to get as far away from the fire and Mowgli as they could. Mowgli said, "I can see that you do not want me with you. I am leaving, but I shall come back and when I do, I shall come with Sher Khan's skin." He threw some burning sticks at Sher Khan. The tiger disappeared into the jungle. The young wolves hurried behind him.

158 Mowgli gets punished

Mowgli climbed on to Bagheera's back and laid his head down. He was very happy to be finally rescued. The three friends just slipped out of the Cold Lairs. They looked back and saw the monkeys sitting quietly, staring straight into Kaa's eyes. Mowgli said, "Baloo and Bagheera, I have been a bad man-cub. I am sad and sorry." Baloo said, "You may be sorry, but you still have to be punished for not listening to me, your teacher." "Right," added Bagheera. "You have got us all into trouble, so you must be cuffed. Mowgli, do you have anything to say?" "No, Bagheera, I did wrong. I must be punished." Bagheera tapped him a dozen times with his paw. A tap from Bagheera was like a severe beating for Mowgli, but he took it quickly. He fell, rolled over, but quietly took the beating. "Now you can jump on to my back, Little Brother," said Bagheera, "and we will go home."

159 Mowgli defeats Sher Khan

Mowgli walked to the village. When the villagers saw him at the gate, they all came out. "He's a wolf-child!" some screamed. "Chase him away!" But one woman named Messua came and hugged Mowgli. "This is my child," she said. "I had lost him when he was a baby." The villagers decided that she could keep him, so she took him to her hut. She fed him milk and cared for him. At night, she made a bed for him on a wooden cot. Mowgli lay down on it, but he had never slept on a cot before, so he went out of the hut and lay down outside. In the middle of the night, he felt a cold nose rubbing his face. He looked up and saw Grey Brother, one of his wolf brothers. "What is it?" he asked. "Sher Khan has vowed to kill you." "Thank you, Grey Brother. Come again tomorrow night, and tell me what is going on in the jungle." Grey Brother promised and disappeared into the jungle. Mowgli was a bright boy, hence soon learnt many things in the village. After some months, Mowgli was allowed to take a herd of buffaloes to graze. He was happy. At last he had been accepted as a part of the village. One day, Grey Wolf informed Mowgli, "Sher Khan is coming to kill you today." "Now we shall have some action," said Mowgli. "But we need others to help us." "I am here," said a voice. Mowgli yelled with joy when he saw Akela. "Oh Akela, you haven't forgotten me! Thank you for coming. Now here is the plan," Mowgli said to the two wolves. "When I take the herd to graze, we will divide it into two. Grey Brother, you take care of one and Akela, you take care of the other." The two wolves chased the buffaloes as they had been told to do. They ran swiftly into the herd and separated it into two halves. The buffaloes, terrified to see the wolves after them, ran and crashed into one another. Mowgli was watching. He heard Sher Khan's growl. The tiger was ready to pounce on him when he heard the deafening noise of the large herd of buffaloes running towards him from both sides. He knew that he was trapped. He tried to run into the jungle, but there was nowhere to escape buffaloes ran over him to death. Mowgli and Grey Brother now began to skin Sher Khan. Mowgli had vowed to take the tiger's skin to the 'Council Rock'. He had not forgotten his promise. Buldeo, the village headman, came up to him and said, "Let me skin the tiger. I will give you one rupee." "Go away!" shouted Mowgli. "The skin is mine." Before Buldeo could speak again, Grey Brother jumped up. Buldeo screamed and raced back to the village.

160 Mowgli decides to hunt alone

Carrying the skin of Sher Khan, Mowgli proudly walked back to the village. He was sure the villagers would be proud of him. But the villagers asked him to go away. They were waving big sticks at him. Mowgli saw Messua crying as he turned away towards the jungle. Grey Brother and Akela were waiting for him. The three silently walked to the cave of Mother Wolf. Tears of joy sparkled in her eyes when she saw him. Mowgli said, "Mother, I have done as I had promised. Here is Sher Khan's skin." "I knew you would kill Sher Khan, my son," replied Mother Wolf. Mowgli said. "Now I will go to the Council Rock, so that the pack can see the skin." He climbed the Council Rock and threw the skin on it. "See for yourselves, O wolf pack, that I have killed Sher Khan and have returned with his skin, as I had promised." The wolf pack rose and said, "You and Akela will lead us. You are the bravest." "No, I will never lead you. You had once driven me away saying I was not your brother. So I turn my back on you. From now on, I will hunt alone." With these words, Mowgli jumped down from the Council Rock. Grey Brother and Akela were waiting for him, so were Baloo and Bagheera. They happily walked away from the wolf pack, into the jungle—their home.

161 The bad Lady

Raghu was a carpenter who had a very nasty wife. She developed a friendship with one youth in her village. The youth was in fact a thief. One day, he conspired to rob the woman. The thief persuaded her to elope with him with whatever she had and leave her old husband. The woman readily agreed. One night, when her husband was fast asleep, she gathered all the riches in a bag and fled. She met the thief on the border of the village. Running, they came upon a river. "But I don't know how to swim!" said the woman. "Why do you worry when I am with you? First I'll cross the river and deposit the wealth on the other bank. Then I'll swim back and carry you." The woman happily handed over her bag to the thief.

The thief dived into the river and was out of sight. The woman sat on the bank for hours waiting, but the thief never showed up. Meanwhile, a wolf with a piece of meat in his mouth passed by. He saw a fish in the river. He dropped the meat and ran for the fish. An owl swooped down and flew away with the meat. And the fish too vanished deep into the river. Seeing this, the woman laughed at the wolf. The clever wolf answered the woman, "Not at me but you should be laughing at yourself. Just look at you: Now no husband, no lover, and no money. Your condition is more pitiable than mine. I will somehow manage to get food again, but what will you do? You've lost everything." After saying this, the wolf went away leaving the woman to bear the consequences of her own actions.

162 The Teacup

The afternoon didn't seem to end. Susan had nothing to do. She went into the garden. Looking beyond the hedge, she saw a little girl around the corner of her house. "What's your name?" asked Susan. "Io," said the girl. "Where do you live?" "Down the road." "Would you like to come in and play?" "Oh yes!" Susan took Io upstairs to the attic where they would not disturb anyone. The attic was full of trunks and boxes. Susan had often looked inside them. One day, she had found a lovely toy tea-set in one. When she had asked her grandmother about it, Grandmother had said, "It belongs to your cousin Judy. She used to play with it when she was a little girl like you." Susan showed that tea-set to Io. "Oh," gasped Io, "it's beautiful!" Suddenly, Susan heard Grandmother's voice from outside. "Quick, put it back!" she whispered to Io. In hurry, one of the cups slipped down and fell with a crash! It lay on the floor in pieces. For seconds, both the girls kept looking at the broken cup. "Susan, where have you been? Who is she?" Grandmother exclaimed as the girls came into her room. Susan was very scared. "This is Io," said she. "We were playing in the attic." "Go and wash up, Susan," Grandmother said as Io bade goodbye and left. "Judy has come to visit us and has also brought her little baby!" As Susan was taking long in washing, Judy wandered into the attic. She returned carrying the box with the tea-set. Susan was out by then. "Susan, look! Do you know about it? I used to play with this tea-set when I was a little girl. Oh, I had forgotten all about it! Would you like to have it?" Susan felt guilty. She showed the broken teacup to Judy. Telling her how it broke, Susan started crying. Without a word, Judy simply gave her little cousin a big warm hug and said, "This tea-set is now yours. Do with it what you please."

163 The Canon Flowers

The Master of the Prairie was unhappy to see his barren lawns. He asked the Prairie: "Where are your flowers?" The Prairie replied: "Master, I have no seeds." The Master ordered the birds to get the best seeds. The birds carried seeds of different flowers and strewed them in the Prairie's bossom. Soon the Prairie bloomed with beautiful crocuses, roses, lilies, buffalo beans, yellow crowfoot, wild sunflowers, and summer long. The Master was happy to see the smiling flowers but he missed clematis, columbine, sweet violets, and wind flowers. Hence, their seeds were also immediately sown. On his next visit to the Prairie, the Master was appalled to see the mutilated Prairie. The weeping Prairie informed him that the fierce wind had swept away the flowers. The Master denounced the lightning. The agitated lightning attacked the Prairie by piercing its heart. A kind little river poured its waters through the cleft, and the birds carried canon seeds and strewed them. New buds bloomed in the deserted Prairie. It once again blushed with colours of the violets and the wind-flowers. The maiden-hair blossomed everywhere, and the canon become the master of the place.

164 The Snowdrop

It was winter, and snow had spread its blanket all over. But one house stood warm and cozy. It was the house where a pretty flower lived—deep under the earth and snow. One day, it rained and the drops trickled through the snow down into the ground. A tiny sunbeam, bright and slender, pierced down through the earth and tapped on the door of the pretty flower. "Come in," said the flower. The tiny sunbeam was unable to lift the heavy latch. Only during the spring, it could grow strong and healthy. The flower grew quite tired of waiting. After a long wait, she decided to stretch herself and rise up a little. So the flower pushed and pushed. The walls were softened by the rain and warmed by the little sunbeams. So, the flower shot up from under the snow, with a pale green bud on its stalk and some long narrow leaves on either side. It was biting cold. The flower danced to the tunes of the breeze and was very happy to be out from the confines of her deserted home. Draped in a white dress, she kissed the sun on his cheek. "Oh!" shouted the children as they ran into the garden, "See the Snowdrop! There it stands so pretty, so beautiful... the first, the only one!!"

165 A Benefactor of Mankind

A passenger tried to start a meaningful conversation with the person sitting next to him in the train. "Excuse me, Sir," he said. "You're not going to get off at the next station, are you?" "No," replied the other passenger. The man then began conversing to the other passenger about the country's socio-economic problems: "People are always jumping to conclusions, giving no time to observation, which resulted in friction—a constant friction." Eventhough the other passenger wasn't showing much enthusiasm in the discussion, the speaker still continued, "At present, we are comparative strangers. But when we get to know each other better, we shall slowly but surely come to realize that each of us is trying to do our best." "But I have no interest in knowing you any better," interrupted the irritated passenger. The speaker replied, "You see, Sir, this is where the problem lies. Despite belonging to one country, we don't even want to know each other..." And the speaker—inspite of the fact that his listener was getting annoyed—carried on saying that one shouldn't judge each other but should make efforts in exploring passions in others, that would benefit all fellowmen. The speaker added, "My tendency is to treat you like a stranger and not to give you credit for your noble generosity. But I am determined to overcome this attitude and recognize you as a brother. I know I'm a hundred years ahead of my age, but someone must make the sacrifice—" The train stopped at the next station. The other passenger got up to alight. The speaker said to him, "But you weren't to get off at this station!" The other passenger replied, "I am severely inspired by your oration. So, I have changed my mind." With these words, he got off from the train. The speaker—or, should be called the Benefactor of the Mankind—sat there for a while pondering over the grave problem the world was facing. Suddenly, however, he clapped his hands to his pockets and ran forward to the conductor. He asked the conductor, "Did the man I was talking to get off?" "Yes, Sir; did you lose anything?" The benefactor smiled sadly. "The world has lost a priceless idea, I have only lost my new gold watch."

166 The Boy hunting Locusts

A boy had hunted a good number of locusts. When he saw a scorpion, he mistook him for a locust and advanced his hand to catch it. But the scorpion warned the boy showing his stinger, "If you had but touched me, my friend, you would have lost me – and all your locusts too!"

167 Tenali the Boy of Brains

Once, the young Tenali accompanied his neighbour to the house of a rich and powerful landlord. The landlord was renowned for his scholarly knowledge and intelligence. While in the house, the neighbour introduced Tenali to the landlord and said "He is a prodigy. I've never seen such an intelligent boy. He has an answer for everything." The haughty landlord was offended to hear someone else's praise before him because he considered himself to be the most intelligent man of all. "He doesn't look very intelligent to me, though," said the landlord, glancing at Tenali. "In any case, the more intelligent a boy is, the duller he becomes as a man!" "Is that true?" asked Tenali, with an air of innocence. "Then, Sir, as a boy you must have been even more intelligent than I am!"

168 Tenali Rama's entry into Bhuvana Vijayam

During his childhood, Tenali Rama was very mischievous. His witty pranks and humour brought laughter to some while others complained about it furiously. An intelligent lad, Tenali, was admired by all & sundry. One day, the provincial ruler paid a visit to the institution where Tenali studied. He interacted with the children in the classroom. "Who among you is the most intelligent?" asked the ruler. Only Tenali had the nerve to raise his hand. The ruler was impressed with the little boy's courage and confidence. He blessed the child, "You will visit places, my child." And how right that ruler was: Tenali grew up to be one of those people in India's history who are known for their wisdom. He practised poetry and composition and had mastered languages and grammar. He married a beautiful girl and was blessed with children. The responsibility to fend for his family drove Tenali to earn a proper means of living. In his pursuit, Tenali learnt that the ruler of Vijayanagara—Sri Krishnadevaraya—was a revered patron in poetry and literature. Emperor Krishnadevaraya himself was a devout scholar who had impeccable knowledge in the subject. Tenali sought to find a permanent place in the court of the emperor. To fulfill his ambition, the intellectual headed to meet the royal priest and won the man's admiration with his wisdom. The priest assured Tenali to introduce him to the emperor. But several days passed and with no positive response from the priest, Tenali got impatient and went to meet another popular court-scholar, Nandi Thimanna. Tenali appeased him with his proficiency in the art of poetry. Nandi offered Tenali his shawl which was gifted to him by the emperor himself, as a gesture of appreciation.

The next day, Tenali draped the shawl and went to meet the emperor. Krishnadevaraya was holding a meeting with the ministers of his empire. When he saw Tenali with the shawl, he questioned, "Where did you get this shawl?" Tenali said, "My Lord, you gave this shawl to Nandi when he impressed you with his faculty; he gave it to me when I impressed him with mine." Krishnadevaraya was highly impressed with the manner in which Tenali confidently walked into the court and talked to him. He appreciated his intelligence and presence of mind also. Without a second thought, he appointed Tenali as his court-jester-poet. Thus was the entry of Tenali Rama into Bhuvana Vijayam—the house of seven best poets of Vijayanagara—now eight!

169 Around the Campfire

The great Tenali Rama was on a travelling spree. In an instance, he came across a group of retired soldiers. The night was falling, and the veterans started sharing their experiences in the battle field round the fire. One old soldier prided how he single handedly took seven rival soldiers down. The second one glorified himself with his heroic adventures of keeping an entire enemy battalion at bay. At last, when they were finished with their storytelling, they turned to Tenali derisively. "I don't suppose you have any adventure worth telling," said one of the grizzled warriors. Being the wittiest person he was, Tenali quickly added, "Oh, but I have one." "You have?" asked the soldiers. "Yes!" said Tenali. "Once, while travelling, I chanced upon a deserted tent. I knocked at the door, but no one responded. I dared to go in and saw the biggest man ever, lying on the floor. The man was a ferocious dacoit, who was being hunted in many countries for numerous crimes." "What happened next?" asked the soldiers in chorus, now quite interested in Tenali's story. "I cut off his toe and ran for dear life," said Tenali. "His toe?" asked a soldier. "Why toe? You should have cut off his head when you had the chance!" "Oh! Never mind. Somebody had already done that," said Tenali, grinning.

170 The Key to Heaven

Balu, a notorious dacoit, hit upon a brilliant plan of extracting valuables from the villagers. So, he disguised himself as a saint and headed to a village. The humble villagers were delighted to have Balu—a dacoit in the guise of a man—and received him with great honour. They sat down before him for his daily preaching and brought specially prepared

dishes for the pious saint. This went on for several days. When Tenali Rama heard of this, he smelt a rat. Next day, he went to meet the saint and sat beside him. The saint kept on repeating the same hymns over and over again. Tenali realized that the saint was an imposter. Suddenly, he leaned forward and plucked a strand of hair from the saint's beard. "I have the key to Heaven!" declared, he triumphantly. The villagers were taken aback. Tenali continued, "This saint is so great that if I keep the hair from his beard with me, I will be blessed forever!" With this, there started a scuffle amongst the villagers to get hold of the sacred hair. Balu was petrified. He ran for his life and was never heard of again.

171 Tenali's List of Fools

A horse trader from a far away land came looking for Emperor Krishnadevaraya. The trader had some quality horses for sale. The emperor was keen to buy a few. So he gave an advance of 5,000 gold coins to the trader. The trader promised to deliver the horses in two days time and left the empire. That evening, the emperor found Tenali Rama scribbling on a sheet of paper. "What are you doing?" asked he. "I'm making a list of the greatest fools in the empire," said Tenali. The emperor was stunned to find his name placed on top of the list. "What is the meaning of this?" demanded, he angrily. "You think I am a fool!" asked the angry emperor. "Any man, who would give away 5,000 gold coins to a stranger and expect him to return, is a fool!" replied Tenali. "Oh! So that's what is troubling you," said the emperor. "You think the man won't return. But what if he does?" "In that case, Your Imperial Majesty," said Tenali with a mischievous smile, "I'll replace your name on the list with mine." And the emperor could not help laughing.

172 Tenali climbs out of Trouble

There was a time when Emperor Krishnadevaraya got upset with Tenali Rama and ordered him to leave his dominion. After some days, the emperor was crossing a forest on his horse. There he saw a man, who briskly scrambled up a tree on seeing him. When the emperor neared the tree, he looked up and recognized that the man was his former minister Tenali Rama. "You are still here!" thundered the emperor. "Didn't I ask you to leave my empire?" Clever Tenali replied, "You did, Your Imperial Majesty; and accordingly, I travelled away, all over the world, but

wherever I went, I learnt that I was still in your dominion. Now the only thing left for me to do is to go to Heaven; and as you can see, I have already started in that direction." Hearing Tenali, the emperor burst out laughing. He immediately forgave the jester and took him back to his court.

173 Tenali & the Thieves

One night, a loud thud in the backyard woke up Tenali Rama. He peeped out of his window and saw that two burglars were trying to break into his house. Tenali woke his wife and informed her. He asked her only to say "Yes" and repeat after him. When the burglars neared their window, Tenali said to his wife in a clear tone, "I am now relieved about our huge treasure which is safely placed in a trunk hidden inside the well. No person can ever get hold of it. Now, we can sleep peacefully." His wife added, "Yes, you have come up with a brilliant idea of hiding our treasure in the well." Listening to this, the greedy thieves decided to draw the water out from the well and then steal the booty. They started draining out the water into a small canal which led to a garden. The night passed. The two thieves couldn't find a single penny in the well. In the morning, people from the neighbourhood nabbed the burglars. The two were thrown behind the bars. Tenali's wife felt proud of her husband. She said, "You are a true genius, and I should really thank the thieves for watering our garden. I need not do it for another week."

174 Tenali in Delhi Durbar

The fame of Tenali Rama reached Babur also—the first Mughal emperor. He wished to meet him, hence invited him to his Delhi Durbar. With Emperor Krishnadevaraya's permission, Tenali headed to Delhi. He was received with great respect and was settled in the royal guest house. There, the clever Babur had already instructed his courtiers to neither laugh nor even smile at any of Tenali's jests. When Tenali told Babur and his courtiers many witty tales and jokes, they were all silent. This went on for many days. So Tenali stopped visiting the court and decided to follow Babur and observe his routine. Tenali learnt that the emperor was very generous and always up to help the needy. Next day, by River Yamuna, Tenali, in the guise of an old man, waited for Babur to pass. He had a mango sapling and a spade in his hands. The moment he saw him approaching, he came into action. Babur saw the old man and wondered why an old person like him should take the pain of planting a tree, as he would not be alive to eat its fruit. So

he asked the old man the reason. The old man replied, "I am not planting it for myself, Huzoor. As I lifelong enjoyed the fruits of the trees planted by my ancestors, so the others should enjoy the fruits of this tree after me." Babur was so moved with the reply that he gave a bag full of gold coins to him. The old man thanked him with great humility. Pleased than before, Babur handed him another bag of gold. The old man was now even more humble. Babur could not help offering him the third bag of gold. Now, the prime minister watching all requested the emperor to leave at once fearing that the witty old man would soak every drop of the royal wealth from him. When they were leaving, the old man asked Babur to turn back. When he turned, he saw Tenali standing with a false beard in his hand. Babur understood the entire episode and accepted Tenali's might. Here, Krishnadevaraya was happy that his great jester-poet kept his nose up in Delhi also.

175 Tenali & the Magician

Once, a talented magician was displaying his tricks in the court of Emperor Krishnadevaraya. The entire courtroom was spellbound with the magical extravaganza. Once finished, the magician challenged the people to outwit him in his own art. No one dared to come face-to-face with him. Then the wisest minister of the emperor—certainly, Tenali Rama—stepped forward. He said to the magician, "I ask you to perform an act with your eyes open which I can perform with my eyes closed." The magician said, "I can definitely do anything with my eyes open which you can do with your eyes closed". Tenali whispered something to the guard. Within minutes, the guard turned up with a bowl full of sand. Tenali closed his eyes and poured some sand out of the bowl on his eyes. He then turned to the magician and said, "Now please do the same with your eyes all open." The magician accepted his defeat and left. Krishnadevaraya praised Tenali and rewarded him.

176 The Emperor lays a Condition

Once, Emperor Krishnadevaraya came up with a bizarre idea. He happily handed over a bag of fifty gold coins to each courtier. He asked them to spend the money as they pleased but only on one condition- every time they decided to spend the money, they would have to see his face. The courtiers were thrilled to get a bag of gold. They hit the markets to buy the best articles. But every time they zeroed in on something, the emperor's words

would start ringing in their ears. They became confused as to how to see the emperor's face before spending the money. After much brainstorming, they decided to give up. One whole week passed. When the court assembled on after a whole week, Krishnadevaraya enquired about their shopping. The royal priest rose from his seat. On behalf of all the courtiers, he said, "Your Imperial Majesty, all of us went to the market with great enthusiasm. But we could not buy anything at all. How and where could we see your face in the market?" Hearing this, Krishnadevaraya began to laugh. He then asked Tenali Rama, "Did you buy anything?" Tenali was dressed in new clothes and ornaments. He stood up and announced that he had bought his new attire with the money that had been given to him. Everyone was surprised at how he managed to buy the expensive articles without seeing the emperor's face. They were also silently delighted that Tenali had violated the emperor's order and would be punished for his act. Krishnadevaraya said, "Tenali Rama! You have not fulfilled the condition laid down by me. You did not see my face in the market. Yet you dared to buy these things!" Tenali replied, "My Lord, I have spent every single gold coin only after seeing your face." Krishnadevaraya said, "How is that possible?" Tenali said, "My Lord, have you forgotten that every gold coin bears the imprint of your face?" "Oh!" said Krishnadevaraya, rather pleased. He smiled gently. All the courtiers were left dumb-struck.

177 Delhi Sultan's Wish & Mahabharata

From time immemorial, almost all the rulers of every generation have shown tolerance towards the religions practised in India. Once, a war broke out between the Sultan of Delhi—Adil Shah and the Emperor of Vijaynagara—Krishnadevaraya. After years of enmity, the two regimes decided to come to terms and establish a truce. The two rulers were trying hard to maintain cordial ties between their respective empires. One day, Krishnadevaraya along with his proficient courtiers went to visit Adil Shah in Delhi. The sultan received them with hospitality and gave them a red-carpet welcome. Many celebrations took place in the honour of Emperor of Vijayanagara. During a discussion, Adil Shah urged the scholars and the poets from the Krishnadevaraya's band to recite some sequences from the epic Mahabharata. They kept his request. After listening, Adil Shah expressed his desire before the emperor to allow his noblemen to rewrite the episodes of Mahabharata portraying him and his friends as Pandavas and his rivals as Kauravas. The whole band was shocked to hear the sultan. They somehow managed to close the day's meeting. Krishnadevaraya was very worried. An urgent meeting was called upon. Time was ticking away, and none of the intellectuals had been able to squeeze out a

concrete solution. At last, the wisest of all the ministers—Tenali Rama—came forward. He asked his emperor to relax and let him handle the situation. On the appointed day, all the dignitaries along with the two powerful rulers came together. Tenali stood up and bowed before the Delhi Sultan with great respect. He informed Adil Shah that the courtiers had rewritten the epic but... a hitch had shown up. He requested Adil Shah for a private talk over the sensitive matter. Once alone with the sultan, Tenali tried to explain but was hesitant. Adil Shah ordered, "What is the problem? Be quick." "You are aware, Huzoor, that Pandavas were five. All the five were married to Draupadi and were sharing her equally..." Tenali stressed, "We are unable to portray your image as Dharmaraja in this regard, thinking about the prestige of the King of Kings." Before Tenali could finish, Adil Shah hastened to say, "Stop this nonsense now! I cannot take this anymore. Stop rewriting Mahabharata immediately. I will never accept this." It went exactly as planned. The rewriting of the Mahabharata was annulled; and once again with the help of Tenali's quick wit, Krishnadevaraya took a sigh of relief.

178 The royal Parrot

One bright sunny day, Emperor Krishnadevaraya went for a walk in his private garden with his favourite minister, Tenali Rama. The Royal gardens looked beautiful with the birds twittering on the fruit laden trees, and the sweet fragrance of the flowers filled the air. The emperor couldn't stop admiring his surroundings as Tenali Rama looked on. After a nice long walk, they headed back to the palace to see the emperor's most cherished friend, the royal parrot. The parrot had its own room in the palace. Its cage was made of gold and was decorated with all kinds of precious stones. It had a diamond necklace around its neck. A silver water bowl and a golden bowl filled with berries and nuts were placed near the feet of the royal parrot. On reaching there, they were both shocked to see it screeching wildly. This worried the emperor terribly. It was swinging violently to and fro on its golden perch. So, the emperor took it out from the cage and allowed it to perch on his arm. Tenali Rama intently tried to soothe the bird. Seeing Tenali, the emperor asked, "What are you thinking? Isn't my friend a real beauty?" Tenali paused for a moment and then spoke, "I think that your friend might not be very happy here, My Lord." "Not happy? But he has everything," said the emperor in fury. "What more could it need?" Tenali anwered humbly, "Forgive me, My Lord. But I think he needs freedom. We must not forget that the sky is his home." Annoyed at Tenali's comments, he shouted, "Never show me your face again," and he walked away. Thereafter, the jester couldn't be seen at the court for the royal meals. Even the courtiers were frightened

to go near him. The next morning, the emperor ordered the courtiers to serve him his meal. While he was eating, there was a knock at the door. The guard opened the door and was shocked to see a man with an earthen pot over his head. The pot had two holes from which a pair of eyes were peeping out. The emperor was startled and confused at the same time. "Who are you stranger?" asked he. "It's me, Tenali Rama, My Lord," was the reply. Angry, the emperor shouted, "Tenali, how dare you disobey my orders! Didn't I tell you not to show me your face again?" "Indeed you did, My Lord. That is why I have this pot over my head to cover my face – so you would not see my face," answered the witty minister. The emperor burst out laughing. Thrilled at his humour, the emperor ordered him to take the pot off his head and resume his seat at the court. The emperor had a hearty meal, then he asked Tenali to go for a walk with him to his private garden once again. Tenali accompanied him and was glad to see that the emperor had taken his advice. "Forgive me, Tenali. You are right. The sky is his real home," said the emperor, setting the royal parrot free.

179 The ambitious Barber

Every morning, the royal barber's task was to give Emperor Krishnadevaraya his daily shave. One morning, when the barber came to shave the emperor's beard, he found him asleep. Without waking the emperor up, the barber continued to do his job. He did his job with such skill and accuracy that the King continued to sleep, undisturbed. When he awoke, he found that the barber had already shaved his beard. Amazed and impressed with the barber's ability he decided to reward him. So, he asked the barber, "Ask for anything you want, young man, and I promise that you shall have it!" When the barber heard this, he was thrilled. "Your Imperial Majesty, I have always wanted to serve you as minister in the Royal Court. Would you allow me this position as a reward?" asked the barber. "Indeed," replied the emperor, without thinking of the consequences. However, when the news of the barber reached the other ministers, they were not happy. They felt that an uneducated person was most likely to misuse his powers when promoted to such a high position. So they approached Tenali Rama and narrated the entire story. Tenali too concluded that the emperor had made a hasty decision. So, he decided that something must

be done to make the emperor realise his mistake. The next morning, the emperor went by the river and saw Tenali bathing a black dog. He was surprised to see how hard Tenali was scrubbing the dog. Rushing towards him, the emperor asked, "What do you think you are doing, Tenali?" "Your Majesty, I am trying to change this black dog into a white one," was the reply. "But that's impossible, Tenali; are you out of your mind?" asked the emperor. "Well, I just thought that if you could promote a barber to a minister, then even I can change the colour of this dog!" replied Tenali, mockingly. The emperor realised that Tenali was not actually trying to change the colour of the dog but simply telling him that it was not wise to promote a barber to a minister's position just because he shaved his beard perfectly while he was asleep. Walking away, the emperor said, "Thank you, Tenali. I will set things right in court today."

180 The Secret of the invisible Fabric

One day, Emperor Krishnadevaraya was visited by a beautiful woman in his court. She said, "I can make divine clothes for you that no one else on earth can. But being divine clothes, they can only be seen with pure eyes. If you be kind to permit us, it could be a fine discovery for your empire." Krishnadevaraya was so impressed with her idea that he gave her lots of fund to make a divine dress for him. After a year, when he heard nothing from the woman yet, he sent some of his men to her to enquire about his divine dress. When those men reached, they were shocked to see that the loom weavers were working on was bare—having no threads. The woman saw Krishnadevaraya's men and asked, "Is your emperor ready to see the divine dress? It is only visible to the pure eyes and I am sure you can see it." Scared of being labeled as sinners, the men nodded in yes. They all went to the palace. When the woman displayed the invisible dress to the emperor, he and all in the court were silent and didn't dare to speak a word in fear of being called impure. Krishnadevaraya turned to Tenali Rama. Tenali read the confusion in the emperor's eyes. He said to the woman, "Lady, I feel that this divine fabric will look more beautiful on you than on our emperor. Would you mind wearing it for him?" The woman's heart popped into her mouth. She was caught! She thought it better to confess her fraud. Krishnadevaraya banished her and her 'divine' group from his empire.

181 An Elephants' Fleet in a Mosquito's Throat!!

Once, the envious court poet Rama Raja Bhushana bribed the palace guard to recite a poem before Tenali Rama. The poem was derogatory, suggesting that a fleet of elephants is stuck in a mosquito's throat. When Tenali heard this, he became furious. Very shortly, the wily guard informed Emperor Krishnadevaraya that Tenali had insulted the court with his poem. The emperor ordered Tenali to recompose the poem using a situation from Mahabharatha. The wise minister narrated a story depicting the brave 'Pandavas' as the fleet of elephants who were compelled to live a life incognito after their ouster by the 'Kauravas.' Krishnadevaraya applauded Tenali and rewarded him for his intelligence.

182 Tenali humiliates Rama Raja Bhushana

Once, Emperor Krishnadevaraya requested the court poet Rama Raja Bhushana to recite some lines from one of his popular poems. Bhushana was a romantic poet who celebrated women and their beauty through his poems. Bhushana narrated the most beautiful poetry from his collection. Krishnadevaraya was deeply moved to hear it. Appeased with the poet, he rewarded him with a sum of one thousand gold coins. Meanwhile, the wisest jester of Krishnadevaraya, Tenali Rama, was watching all this quietly. Suddenly, Tenali sprang up on his feet and announced aloud in the assembly- "My Lord, Rama Raja Bhushana bought this poem from Nandi Thimmanna for one thousand gold coins. It is surprising how come you know the exact price of the deal. It would not be profitable to him if you pay him exactly the same price at which he purchased." Hearing this, the total gathering broke into laughter. Bhushana ground his teeth silently, but the damage was already done. He vowed to teach Tenali a lesson for his humiliating remarks. One fine evening, Bhushana along with his disciple happened to pass through the street in which Thimmanna's residence was located. A discussion was going on in the poet's house. Bhushana could locate Tenali from a distance, participating in the discussions. Loudly, Bhushana told his disciple a sarcastic poem describing the session as an assembly of pigs that gathered near the threshold of Thimmanna. Hearing this, Tenali picked up the tone in which Bhushana was speaking. He stopped the discussion and sang some verses which meant that the discussion session would resemble a gathering of pigs to those who compose prose or poetry with a mixture of nonsense, brutal language, and irrelevant issues. Bhushana taking what Tenali meant immediately rushed off from the place along with his disciple.

183 A handful Grain

Vidyullatha, a beautiful woman, challenged everyone with one thousand gold coins who could outwit her. Many tried their intellect but failed. One day, Tenali Rama, disguised as a firewood vendor started selling loudly at the door of Vidyullatha. The lady appeared and asked for a load of wood. The vendor asked for a handful of grain. When she offered him the same, the vendor refused it saying that she had failed to keep her promise, and now she would have to pay him one thousand gold coins. The matter was taken to the court. There Tenali justified himself saying that he asked for a handful grain which meant just one grain in hand which she misunderstood for a handful of grains. Thus Vidyullatha, was defeated.

184 Tenali & the Brinjals

Tenali Rama couldn't stop talking about the delicious brinjals he had presently eaten at a feast given by Emperor Krishnadevaraya. It was a rare variety of brinjals grown this year in the vegetable garden of the emperor. Tenali's wife was filled with craving and insisted on tasting the brinjals herself. Tenali tried to make her understand that stealing from Krishnadevaraya's private garden meant risking life. But the wife would not care. Tenali had to succumb to her wish and stole two brinjals that very night. The wife cooked them; and she, Tenali and their son enjoyed them in dinner. Afraid of being ever caught by Krishnadevaraya, Tenali emptied a bucket of water on his son who was asleep on the terrace. Tenali then lifted him up and brought him inside saying that it was raining heavily. Next morning, Krishnadevaraya had come to know that two brinjals were missing from his garden. Yet, no knowledge of the thief only increased his anger. The chief minister expressed that he suspected Tenali Rama because no one but he only could carry out such a daring and dangerous feat. He then advised the emperor to not ask Tenali but his son about the truth, for Tenali would never teach his own son to lie. Tenali's son was brought and he told them that he ate brinjals last night. Tenali was

called upon for punishment. Standing before Krishnadevaraya, Tenali explained that his son had been talking strange things since morning—like it rained heavily last night—because he had bad dreams in the night. When Krishnadevaraya asked the son how was the weather in the night yesterday, the son exclaimed that it rained heavily. Krishnadevaraya apologized to Tenali for suspecting him and thus Tenali saved himself with his wisdom.

185 Tenali & his Cat

Vijaya Nagar Empire was under the menace of rats. Every house was asked to raise a cat. Soon, the number of rats decreased. Emperor Krishnadevaraya gifted a cow to each house to feed the cats with milk. But, Tenali Rama's cat disliked milk and would run away. When the emperor learned about it, he desired to witness it himself. At the court, once the cat saw a bowl of milk, he immediately fled from the place. Krishnadevaraya was quiet surprised. Tenali explained that unlike the other cats, his cat being leaner and thus more active was better at catching rats, which was also the main purpose of keeping one cat in every house. Thenceforth, the cats were fed with moderate quantity of milk.

186 Peaches for Tenali

One day, Emperor of China sent some succulent peaches—one of their kind—to King of Tondaimandalam with a note stating- "This divine fruit will give long life to that anyone who eats it." As the fruits were being presented to the ruler, Tenali Rama—who was present there as a visitor—picked up one of the luscious peaches giving in to temptation and bit into it. The king was enraged at Tenali's action. "You've bitten into a fruit meant for me!" thundered he. "You dare so much! You must die for this slight!" As Tenali was being taken away by the royal guards, he sighed dramatically and exclaimed, "What a deceitful man the Emperor of China is. He says that the fruit gives long life that eats it. I took just one bite; and look, I am about to die. O, I am too dreaded to imagine what fate awaits the one who eats it entirely!!" The king was greatly amused by Tenali's wit. He not only pardoned him but also gave him a dozen of the peaches he had risked his life for.

187 No Radish, No Recipe

Tenali Rama returned from his friend's house and told his wife, "I've never eaten anything tastier in my life!" His wife asked, "What did you eat that has pleased your tongue so much?" "Radish halva," replied Tenali, smacking his lips. "Wow, radish!" "Who has ever heard of halva being made from radish! It must have been something else," said his wife, disbelievingly. It was hard for her to understand that anyone could make a halva out of radish. Nevertheless, her curiosity had been aroused, so she asked her husband to get her the recipe from his friend who had served him 'radish halva' and some radishes from the market. When Tenali returned from the market, his wife asked, "Where are the radishes?" "Actually," he replied, "while I was returning from the market, a goat snatched the radishes away." Annoyed at his carelessness, the wife said, "I hope that you have brought the recipe at least, have you?" "Well I thought," explained Tenali with a shrug, "the recipe is of no use without radishes, so I let the starving animal eat that too."

188 Tenali wins War before drawing Swords

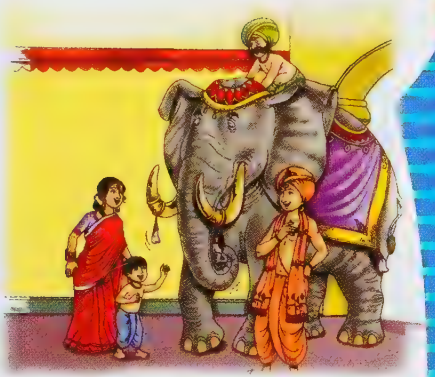
Once, a notable scholar, Rama Shastri, challenged the proficiency of the famous eight jewels of the Vijaya Nagara Empire. With the consent of Emperor Krishnadevaraya, a competition was organized. To crush his pride, Tenali Rama participated and carried something fastened in a nice cloth. When Shastri enquired, Tenali informed him that it was the most popular book ever written, titled 'Thilakashta Mahisha Bandhanam' and that he was going to ask him questions from that book. Shastri had never heard of the book before. Fearing defeat, he made an excuse and hurried out of the court. Thus, Tenali won the war even before drawing the sword, because that book was in fact a block of stone covered with a cloth.

189 Tenali teaches the greedy Priest a Lesson

On the occasion of his mother's death anniversary, Emperor Krishnadevaraya went to the head priest to seek his opinion. The head priest tried to grab the opportunity in order to earn money. He questioned the emperor about his mother's last wish. The clever priest learnt that on her death bed, the deceased lady desired to eat mangoes. But her last wish could not be met. So, the priest suggested that the emperor offered 108 mangoes served

in 108 silver bowls to 108 priests. The emperor agreed and made the offering. When Tenali Rama came to know of this, he smelt rat. He vowed to teach the greedy priest a lesson. Next day, in the pretext of conducting a similar ceremony for his own dead mother, Tenali visited the head priest. He informed the priest that he too wanted to fulfill his mother's last wish. A grand ceremony was organised. The emperor was also invited. Tenali took a red-hot poker and went to the head priest. He said, "Your Reverence, my mother was suffering from pain and wanted a red-hot poker to be placed on her hand. As she died before her wish was fulfilled, let me perform the act on you and your fellow priests." Saying this, he took the poker to the priest and placed it on his hand. He cried in pain and left the place right away along with his colleagues. The emperor realised his mistake and thanked Tenali for opening his eyes.

190 The most difficult Job



Once, Emperor Krishnadevaraya questioned his courtiers about the most difficult job in this world. Everybody replied that the task of ruling an empire is the toughest. But Tenali Rama disagreed and said that the job of being a mother takes the most. To prove this, a mother and her young child were called. Tenali lovingly asked the child to wish for anything he pleased. The child wished for an elephant. The emperor immediately ordered for an elephant. Then the child asked them to fit the animal in his basket so that he could show it to his friends. Krishnadevaraya couldn't fulfil this impossible demand. The child began to cry and nobody was able to placate him. Then, the mother came forward and handing him a toy elephant said, "This big elephant will be too heavy for you. This little one will even fit in your basket." The child was calmed down and Tenali once again emerged victorious.

191 Tenali & the Colour of Diamonds

A poor servant seeking justice came to Emperor Krishnadevaraya. He was cheated by his master who denied his rightful share of diamonds which they had recovered from an old temple in a nearby village. But, the master had another story to tell. Finding himself in a

tight situation, the emperor sent for Tenali Rama. Tenali decided to test the honesty of the defender and summoned him. On the given day, the clever master brought three witnesses. Tenali requested Krishnadevaraya to quietly hide himself behind the curtains. Then Tenali asked the three men about the colour of the diamonds. The first replied that they were kept in a purse, while the second said that they were blue in colour. The third witness informed that they were white. Now everything was crystal clear. Krishnadevaraya came out from his hiding place and punished the greedy master.

192 The Fool of the Year

Emperor Krishnadevaraya set up a contest 'The Fool of the Year' which was open to all of his courtiers as well – apart from his whole empire. All were looking forward to the event as the winner would gain a prize of 5000 gold coins. But their only obstacle was Tenali who always won the competitions. The other courtiers, hence decided that they must keep him out of it. For this, they bribed his servant to lock him in his room in order to detain him from reaching the palace on time for the event. Tenali still somehow reached the palace; but by then, the contest was over. As the name of the winner was about to be announced, seeing Tenali come in, Krishnadevaraya asked, "Why are you so late?" Tenali told him, "My Lord, I am in need of a hundred gold coins and was all this while engaged in trying to raise the amount. "Had you participated in the contest, you might have won the prize money, and your problem would have been solved," said the emperor. "You've really behaved very foolishly, Tenali." "What! You call me—your intelligent courtier—a fool?" asked the shocked Tenali. "Indeed, you are the greatest fool I've ever seen!" affirmed the emperor. "In that case, I have won the contest!" pronounced Tenali. Krishnadevaraya realised that he made a slip; however, he was too proud to acknowledge it and to the vexation of the other courtiers declared Tenali the winner of 'The Fool of the Year' contest.

193 The Well's Wedding Invitation

While Emperor Krishnadevaraya ruled the Vijayanagara Empire, the Mohammedan sultans were ruling Delhi. The kingdoms under the dominion of Hindu rulers irked the powerful sultans, and they were always looking for loopholes to strike their opponents

down. The Delhi Sultan once got an idea, and he instantly sent a wedding invitation to Krishnadevaraya – with the motive of insulting him. Going through the contents of the invitation, the entire court was left astounded. The invitation read that the royal sultan was organising a wedding ceremony of a newly dug well and was therefore inviting every well of Vijayanagar to attend the ritual. But that was not all: There was a warning letter also along with the invite which read that if Emperor Krishnadevaraya failed to send all the wells on the mentioned date, then it would be taken as a slight, and Vijayanagar should then be ready to face the wrath of the sultan. Krishnadevaraya was in a great dilemma. How on earth was it possible to send a well to Delhi? He sent for Chief Minister Thimmarusu for assistance. But he too got confused after reading the letter. Unable to draw any solution, Thimmarusu sought the help of Tenali Rama. Tenali confidently took the challenge and asked Thimmarusu to go home peacefully. Uncertainty lurked in the air when the session was convened next morning. Tenali rose from his seat and started reading a letter prepared by him as Krishnadevaraya's reply to Delhi Sultan. The letter said that they were honoured to have received the invite, but... the wells of Vijayanagara refused to attend the wedding of the newly dug well in Delhi on the accounts that the latter never attended the wedding of any of the wells here. Hence, the only way to conciliate now was that the newly dug well of Delhi personally came down to Vijayanagara, and then its wells would accede to the invitation. When the Sultan of Delhi received the letter, he was stunned. He immediately dropped the idea of insulting Krishnadevaraya. In fact, he was highly impressed with the answer and in return sent many gifts to the emperor.

194 Tenali prostrates to Donkeys

The royal teacher of Emperor Krishnadevaraya, Thattacharya, always disgraced the lower sects. When Tenali Rama came to know about it, he decided to teach the orthodox scholar a lesson. Tenali investigated and learnt that the teacher had this belief that if he encountered a person of minority class, he would be doomed to a donkey in his next birth. So one day, when the emperor and his courtiers were returning from the outskirts of the city, they saw a herd of donkey approaching from the opposite end. Seeing them, Tenali decided to execute his plan. He whizzed past everyone and prostrated to the donkeys. The emperor demanded an explanation for such stupid act. Tenali informed that the animals were actually Thattacharya's relatives who were cursed because of their sin of encountering people from lower sects. Thattacharya hung his head in shame and corrected his ways.

195 The discontented Dog

A dog had just had his lunch and was lazing in his master's garden under the massaging sunshine. With his half-open eyes, he spotted a cat on top of the boundary wall. "If only I could climb!" thought the dog. He was so envious that he didn't even wag his tail when his master came to serve him milk. Next, the dog saw a beautiful fish in the garden-pool. "If only I could live in water, I would keep escaped from the burning sun and remain cool all the time." Now he was angrier. As he grimaced at his destiny, the fish in the pool surfaced and said to him, "It must be very nice on the grass. I wish I too could lie down on it like you and enjoy the sun!" Just then, a sparrow flew past. She stopped seeing the dog lazing around and said to him, "You are so lucky. A human takes care of you, so you can play all day long and no hard work. I so wish I didn't have to build myself a house, search for food, and tire my wings, and could just relax like you!" Listening to all of them, the dog realized how foolish he was being in not appreciating what he had.

196 The Prophet

In a market, a prophet was telling the fortunes of the passers-by. Suddenly, a man came running and informed him, "O prophet! What are doing sitting here? Rush to your house. Some thieves have broken into and are stealing your goods." The prophet gasped in horror and hastened away as fast as he could leaving his caboodle behind. A woman who was witnessing all shouted at the running prophet, "You say you can foretell the fortunes of others, then how could you not foresee your own?"

197 The Cobbler turned Doctor

Failing to meet his ends, a cobbler decided to change his profession. He clicked upon a plan and began to practice medicine. He proclaimed that he has discovered an antidote which can succour every ailment. Soon, he became very popular and earned a lot of money with his deception. Soon, the Governor of the town smelled rat. One day, when the cobbler himself fell ill,

the Governor asked him to have a cup of medicine. Then he pretended to add poison in it. The cobbler was terrified. He admitted that he was a fraud and was fooling the humble people. The people praised the Governor for opening their eyes.

198 How Akbar met Birbal?

Emperor Akbar was returning from hunting and lost his way. At a junction of three roads, he summoned a young boy who happened to pass by at the same time. Akbar asked him which road went to Agra. The boy gave out a laugh. "Sir, everybody knows that roads don't go anywhere. It is you who need to go by this road to reach Agra," he said pointing towards the road going to Agra. Akbar was highly amused with his witty reply and rewarded Mahesh Das, as the boy introduced himself, with his signet ring, and said, "We need fearless people like you. Come to my court with this ring and I will recognize you. This was how Emperor Akbar met future Birbal.

199 How was Birbal born?

Mahesh Das was a grown-up man now. He needed a job. He remembered the words Emperor Akbar had spoken to him while giving him his signet ring. So he took the ring and set out to meet the emperor. There, the royal guard agreed him entry only on the condition that he must be given an equal share from whatever Mahesh received from the emperor. In the court, Mahesh showed Akbar, who was seated on his throne, the ring. Akbar quickly recognized it and granted him a wish. Mahesh asked for a punishment of 100 lashes. Akbar with a heavy heart agreed to the strange request. After the fiftieth lash, Mahesh requested Akbar that the remaining lashes must be presented to the guard, and told him the reason why. The greedy guard was lashed severely for the crime of bribery.

200 Poet Rayadaas

Once lived a rich man who was a miser. He never stood by his words. One day, a notable poet named Rayadaas came to visit him. Rayadaas informed him that he had written many good poems and wished to recite them before someone who could appreciate the verses. The rich man agreed. Rayadaas recited his poems: some were written in the praise of this rich man also. The rich man became very happy and promised to give him a reward. He asked Rayadaas to come back next day. When Rayadaas returned the following day to collect his reward, the rich man refused to pay him saying that he only meant to encourage him. Dejected, Rayadaas started for his home. On the way, he met Birbal and briefed him of the account. Birbal thought for a moment. Then, he gave five gold coins to Rayadaas and asked him to arrange a dinner for the rich man on next full moon. Rayadaas contrived with one of his close friends and invited the rich man for dinner. They also proclaimed to him that the food would be served in gold pots which he could carry along after dinner. The rich man was now very excited. On the appointed day, he came for the dinner. The poet and his friend were already full stomach. Hence, they talked and talked for hours but never uttered a word about food. Midnight fell. The rich man was very hungry. When he could bear no longer, he reminded them about the food. Rayadaas said, "What food? We don't know anything about the food." The rich man said, "You have invited me here for dinner!" Rayadaas said, "That is because we just wanted you to be here, not that we wanted to offer you any food." Meanwhile, Birbal entered and recalled the entire incident to the rich man. The rich man realised his mistake and apologised. He acknowledged Rayadaas as a great poet by taking off his precious necklace and rewarding Rayadaas with it. Then they all sat for a happy meal.

201 Whose Bag?

Once, an oil merchant and a villager came to Emperor Akbar's court to seek justice. The two had a dispute over a bag of money. The oil merchant claimed that the money was his, while the villager also claimed the same. The oil merchant argued that while he was busy with other customers, the villager picked up the bag of money. The villager defended himself saying that the oil merchant was lying. It was a very complicated situation. The court was eager to witness Akbar's decision on this tricky case. Akbar asked his loyal minister, Birbal, to

solve the case. In order to decide who the rightful owner was, Birbal asked a servant to bring a bowl of water. Then, he placed the bag in the bowl. In some time, an oily substance from the bag started floating on the top of the water. It was crystal clear now, that the bag belonged to the oil merchant and not to the villager. Everybody applauded Birbal and the villager was duly punished.

202 The colourful Bird

Emperor Akbar had a huge collection of birds. The birds were of different species, colours and sizes. One day, a bird catcher came to his empire. He brought along a very rare, multi-coloured bird. Akbar was delighted to see the colourful bird. The bird catcher informed the emperor that the bird could dance like a peacock. The bird catcher was immediately rewarded with 50 gold coins. He left the empire in a hurry. When the bird catcher was gone, Birbal said to the emperor, "This bird cannot dance like a peacock, and it has not bathed for many months." Birbal further suggested, "Let me give it a bath," and asked for a glass of water. When Birbal poured water on the bird, the magnificent colours from its feather came off. The entire court gasped in disbelief. It was discovered that the special bird was actually a pigeon, and the bird catcher had fooled everybody—including The Great Akbar—by painting the bird. Akbar asked Birbal how he learnt that the bird was a faux. Birbal then said that he had noticed paint on the nails of the bird catcher. The fraud bird catcher was caught and punished severely.

203 Back to Square One

Once, a famous astrologer was invited as a guest to the court of Emperor Akbar. The curious emperor asked the astrologer about the time it would take to make a full circle of the earth. The astrologer replied that it was impossible. "Why?" asked Akbar. "It may take years to complete the whole journey," said the astrologer. "Don't worry. I will ask my ministers. They have an answer for everything." Akbar repeated the same question to his courtiers. One replied 25 years, the other 50, while the rest concluded that it was impossible to calculate. Amidst this

confusion, the wisest of all the members—Birbal—sat totally quiet. "Why Birbal, you haven't uttered a word," the emperor showed his surprise at Birbal's silence. "I was just calculating the time required to go round the earth," replied Birbal. "So, you got the answer?" asked the emperor. "Sure!" said Birbal, "It will take just one day." "Just one day? You are joking, Birbal. It is impossible! It will take more than one day to cross even our country," said Akbar. "It is possible provided you travel at the speed of the Sun," said Birbal with a mischievous grin.

204 Who is the Donkey?

Once, Emperor Akbar went to a river with his two sons and the wise minister Birbal. On the bank of the river, Akbar and his two sons took off their clothes and asked Birbal to take care of them while they bathed in the river. Birbal was waiting for them to finish their bath. All the clothes were on his shoulder. Looking at Birbal standing like that, Akbar felt like teasing him. So he said, "Birbal, you look like as if you are carrying a washerman's donkey load." Birbal quickly retorted, " Huzoor, washerman's donkey carries only one donkey's load, I am carrying three donkey's load." Akbar was speechless.

205 The loyal Gardener

One day while strolling in his garden, Emperor Akbar stumbled on a rock. He was already not in a good mood and then this fall. He got very angry and ordered for the gardener's arrest and execution. Next day, at the time of execution, the gardener was asked what his last wish was. He requested for an audience with the emperor. His wish was granted, and he was brought in the court. When he came near the throne, he cleared his throat and spat at the emperor's feet. The emperor, should in wrath, demanded to know why he did this. The gardener had done this on Birbal's advice, so Birbal stepped forward in the gardener's defense. He said, "There could be no person more loyal than this unfortunate gardener. Fearing that you ordered his execution for a small reason, he went out of his way to give you a genuine reason for ordering him to be hanged." Akbar realized his mistake and set the gardener free.

206 How many Crows in the Empire?

One day, Emperor Akbar was strolling in his palace garden with his dear minister Birbal. Many crows were flying around. Akbar enjoyed their flying. He wondered how many crows could be there in his empire and immediately posed this question to Birbal. Birbal thought for a moment, then said, "There are ninety five thousand four hundred and sixty three (95,463) crows in your empire, Huzoor." "How do you know that for sure?" asked Akbar. "You can have them counted, Huzoor" said Birbal. Akbar again said, "If there will be less than that, then?" Birbal replied immediately, "That means that the rest of them have gone on vacation to some neighbouring kingdoms." "And if there are more than that, then?" "Then it means that other crows are visiting your empire, Huzoor." Akbar was very pleased with his answer.

207 Truth always finds its Way

Once, Mohan, a wealthy trader, decided to go on a pilgrimage. But he was worried about carrying his money along. So he went to his best friend Gopal, and both of them went to the forest. In the forest, Mohan asked his friend to watch his possessions till he returned. Gopal agreed. Mohan handed his wealth over to Gopal and left on his pilgrimage. Several years later, Mohan returned to his village. He went straight to the door of his old friend Gopal with whom he had left his valuables. But Gopal was singing a different tune; he denied having any money. Dejected, Mohan went to Emperor Akbar. Akbar heard his story and called his wise advisor Birbal. Gopal was summoned to the court. But Gopal denied all allegations. Now Birbal was at his wits' end. Birbal asked Mohan, "Do you have any witness for your story?" "No, Sir. I gave him that money in a forest under a mango tree," replied Mohan. Birbal scolded him, "You are foolish. You do have a witness – that mango tree. Go and bring that mango tree here." Mohan thought that Birbal was neurotic. Nevertheless, he headed towards the forest. After two hours, when Mohan yet did not show up, Birbal said loudly, "Why is this man taking so much time?" Gopal immediately spoke, "Sir, he can't possibly come so soon since the place is pretty far." Birbal kept his silence. After a while, Mohan returned empty-handed. He informed Birbal that the mango tree didn't reciprocate his calls. Birbal assured Mohan that the mango tree had already spoken. He held Gopal guilty since he gave accurate information about the place of incident. Gopal accepted his defeat and returned to Mohan his possessions.

208 Three Idols

A sculptor paid a visit to the court of Emperor Akbar. He came up with a very difficult challenge for the courtiers. The sculptor had three idols which were identical from head to toe. The challenge was to identify the good, ok and bad idol amongst the three. Akbar agreed. The courtiers tried to rate the idols but failed. Birbal noticed a small hole in the ears of the idols. He got curious, so he took three wires and inserted them in the holes. In the case of the first idol, the wire came out from the other ear. In the second, it came out of the mouth; but in the third, it remained inside. Birbal got his answer, and he rated the third idol as good, first as fine, and second as bad. The sculptor asked Birbal to explain. Birbal started, "The third idol (from whose ear the wire remained inside) did not share his secret with anyone, that is why it was good. The first idol (from whose ear the wire came out from the other ear) was fine because it has mistakenly told others what somebody had told it. But the second idol (from whose ear the wire came out from the mouth) remembered everything and even revealed the secret to others." The sculptor was astonished, and Akbar was very happy. He rewarded Birbal with a bag full of gold coins.

209 Birbal & the Vegetarians

Emperor Akbar was a very noble and tolerant ruler. He respected all the other religions in the society as his own. The kind ruler was always ahead in facilitating the requirements of the poor and needy. It happened one day that a group of scholars appeared in his court and said, "O Great Emperor! You are the one who has allowed us to share any of our problems with you. We have stayed silent for a long time, but today we wish to speak up. We want to see our country turn vegetarian." Now, Akbar was in a tight-spot. He knew that meat was the most important food in the market. After much thinking, he decided to call Birbal and find a solution to this problem. Soon, Birbal was standing in the centre of the court. The smart minister said, "Your request can be granted on two conditions: one, that if any animal is found on the road, we are not responsible for their safety; and two, that all animals should be fed in houses till their death, and if any animal is found eating something outside, we are not responsible for their safety also." Then scholars departed happily. Exactly after a month, they returned to the court and announced, "O Emperor! We take our words back. We cannot keep all the animals inside." That is how Birbal brought meat back to the community.

210 Fast Horse

One day, when Emperor Akbar saw Mullah Naseeruddin coming on foot, he promised to give him a horse. He instructed his stableman to give one horse to Mullah. The stableman selected a very weak and sick horse from the stable and sent it to Mullah's house. The horse was so weak and sick that it died on the same night it was delivered. When next day Akbar saw Mullah coming on foot again, he asked in surprise, "What happened to the horse I arranged for you yesterday?" Mullah replied, "Huzoor, the horse had such a big fleet of feet that it crossed the distance from Earth to Heaven in one night only." Akbar was very sorry to know this, and this time he himself arranged a very good horse for him.

211 Birbal's beautiful Explanation

One day, Emperor Akbar saw a woman hugging and kissing a very ugly, and unattractive child. He was very surprised to see that. He asked Birbal why she was cuddling such an unattractive child. Birbal replied innocently, "Huzoor, he must have been her own child. For every mother, her own child is the most beautiful child in the world." The emperor did not seem to be convinced with this explanation, and Birbal guessed this from his face. Next day, in the presence of the emperor, Birbal ordered a guard to present in the court the most beautiful child in the world. Next day, the guard brought an even uglier child. His hair stood on skin like that of a porcupine. The guard presented him to the emperor. "This is the most beautiful child in the world, Your Imperial Majesty," stammered the guard. Akbar asked, "What made you think that this ugly child could be the most beautiful one in the world?" "I went home and posed my problem to my wife. She told me to take our child to the court," replied the guard, meekly.

212 Master or Servant?

Two men with a strange problem came to Emperor Akbar. They both claimed to be Aameer, a rich trader, and accused one another of fraudulence. Now, Akbar was in dilemma. He couldn't decide who was speaking the truth. He then sent for Birbal. After listening to the two sides, Birbal threatened them to speak the truth at once for he had the power to read minds. But both the men kept tight-lipped. Finding no means, Birbal ordered the guard to chop off the head of the guilty. When the puzzled guard neared the two men, one of them jumped up to his feet and pleaded mercy.

213 Akbar is greater than God

Once, a merchant was trying to lure Emperor Akbar into signing a trade agreement. He showered praises on the emperor, glorifying him in the hope of impressing him. But then the merchant realized that his words were not serving his purpose. He then shouted, "O Emperor, you are greater than even God!" Birbal, who was witnessing all this, was quick to anticipate the future catastrophe and started running his brain ahead of time for a solution. Akbar was infuriated with the merchant. Being the noble ruler that he was, Akbar couldn't take the fact that somebody was comparing him to the Almighty Himself! Nevertheless, he controlled his anger and decided to take a dig at the situation. So he asked his courtiers to come up with an answer as to who was greater: God or Akbar. This left the courtiers perplexed. Neither could they agree nor disagree. One by one they bent their heads down. Then Akbar turned to Birbal. Birbal immediately said, "He is right, Huzoor. You are greater than God." Akbar was speechless and asked Birbal, "How is it possible Birbal that I am greater than God Himself!?" Birbal said, "Huzoor, you are indeed greater than God because there is one thing you can do that God can't." "And what is that?" asked Akbar. "God cannot banish anybody from His kingdom because the whole universe is His kingdom, but you can do that easily." Akbar couldn't help laughing out loud and said, "Birbal, you are the best – as always." And he banished the merchant.

214 Why doesn't Hair grow on Palms?

With his unbeatable wit and humour, Birbal had managed to carve a special place for himself in Emperor Akbar's heart. One day, Akbar was in a jovial mood and was enjoying the company of Birbal. All of a sudden, the emperor spread both his palms and noticed that there was no hair on his palms. He asked, "Birbal, can you tell me why there is no hair on my palms?" Birbal politely answered, " Huzoor, the reason is very simple. Everyday you contribute generously to the destitute with both of your hands. How can hair grow on such giving palms?" Akbar was pleased to hear this. However, he decided to further stretch this funny topic; hence, he asked Birbal again, "If it's so, then why there is no hair on your palm?" Birbal at once replied, " Huzoor, the reason is again very simple. Hair of my palms has vanished due to continuous acceptance of gifts and rewards from you." Now Akbar was totally interested in this conversation. In order to corner Birbal one last time, he finally asked, "Now you must tell me why there is no hair on the palms

of other courtiers." Birbal as usual was too smart for Akbar, "Your Imperial Majesty, the answer is obvious. Whenever I get rewards from you, the other courtiers rub their hands out of disappointment and envy. The continuous rubbing does not allow hair to grow on their palms."

215 Eight Feet away

Emperor Akbar was discussing an important matter with his favourite minister Birbal. While Akbar was lying back on his throne, Birbal was standing in front of it, facing the emperor. They were alone in the court at the time. Akbar was in a jovial mood so he decided to tease Birbal. He knew that Birbal's repartee would entertain him for sure, so he asked, "Birbal, I have not made you the Grand Vizier of my court without a reason. You hold this title because you have answers to all my questions – whether straight or strange. Like everyday, today also I have a question for you." "You have every right to ask me whatever you wish. Please go ahead, Huzoor," responded Birbal. Akbar put forth his question, "What is the difference between a donkey and you?" Birbal alternatingly looked at the emperor and at the floor. Akbar was curiously waiting for his answer. So he interrupted the seemingly calculating Birbal, "Come on, tell me. I am waiting for the answer." Birbal bowed to Akbar and quipped, "The difference is only eight feet, Huzoor." If Birbal was an expert in making witty statements, Akbar too had learnt how to catch what Birbal meant. He smiled as Birbal called him a donkey – but in good humour.

216 Question for Question

One day, Emperor Akbar asked Birbal, "Can you tell me how many bangles are there on your wife's wrist?" Birbal said, "No, Huzoor, I cannot." "You cannot? Although everyday you see her hand, yet you cannot tell how many bangles are there on her hand. How is that?" said Akbar. Birbal said, "Let's go to the garden, Huzoor, and I will explain." They both went down a small staircase which led to the garden. After reaching in the garden, Birbal asked, "You climb up and down this small staircase everyday. Could you tell how many steps it has?" Akbar smiled and then changed the subject.

217 Birbal solves the Problem

Several courtiers were vying to be the Royal Advisor of Emperor Akbar. So one day, when they came to the court, they said to the emperor, "We want to be your Royal Advisor." Akbar said, "No problem, but you will have to pass a test before you can be my Royal Advisor. Whoever passes will be appointed my advisor." They agreed. Akbar unfastened his waist cloth and lay down on the floor and asked the candidates to cover him with that cloth from head to toe. Now everybody tried to cover him, but in vain. If one wanted to cover the head, the feet remained uncovered, or if the feet were covered, then his head remained bare. Just then, Birbal entered the court. Akbar asked Birbal also, if he could cover him with that cloth from head to toe. Birbal paused for a moment, then asked Akbar politely, "Huzoor, could you pull up your knees a little bit?" Akbar did so, and Birbal could cover him from head to toe with the waist cloth. Realising that they failed the test, the courtiers left the court quietly and they never thought again about being the King's Advisor.

218 Birbal does Justice

A man once sold his well to a farmer. Now next day, when the farmer happily went to draw water from his newly bought well the man did not allow him. He said, "I have sold you my well and not the water; therefore, you hold no right on the water of the well." The shocked farmer responded, "How can it be? Why will I buy only a well and not its water. You know how poor I am. I don't have extra money to pay separately for the water." But the man palmed off the matter saying, "That's your problem." The sad farmer now had only one way left—to go to Emperor Akbar. He narrated the whole incident to the emperor and asked for justice. Akbar called Birbal and handed over the farmer's case to him. Birbal sent for the man who had sold the well to the farmer. Birbal asked him, "Why don't you let that farmer use the water of the well? After all, he has bought it from you." The man replied, "Sir, you too say the same thing. Why don't you understand that I have only sold the well to him and not the water? Therefore, he can't take the water of the well. He has not paid for it." Birbal smiled and said, "All right. Since you say that you have only sold the well to the farmer and claim its water is yours; in that case, you too don't have a right to keep your water in his well. You either pay rent to him to allow you to keep your water in his well or take every drop of your water out of the well—immediately!" The man, realising that Birbal had outwitted him, readily agreed to let the farmer draw water from his well.

219 Flowers for Akbar

One day, Emperor Akbar was taking a walk in his royal gardens with several courtiers. Many flowers were blooming at that time of the year. A poet pointed out towards a beautiful flower and said, "Look Huzoor! How beautiful that flower is? No man can produce such a beautiful thing as this." Birbal was also there. He said, "I don't agree; sometimes, man can also make more beautiful things than this." Akbar said, "Oh no, Birbal, you are talking nonsense. This flower is really very beautiful." After a few days, Birbal with the help of a very skilled craftsman from Agra presented a beautiful carved marble bouquet of flowers to Akbar. He was very happy to see it and gave the craftsman one thousand gold coins. Just then, a boy came and presented Akbar a beautiful bouquet of real flowers. He was very happy to see it too, so he gave a silver coin to the boy. Birbal said, "So the carving was more beautiful than the real thing." Akbar understood that he had fallen in the hands of his witty minister once again.

220 I am your Servant, Huzoor

Once, Emperor Akbar and Birbal were riding through some farmland. They happened to pass through a cabbage patch. Looking at the patch, Akbar said to Birbal, "What a delightful vegetable cabbage is. I like it very much." Birbal said, "Huzoor, cabbage is the king of vegetables." Akbar did not reply to this, and they went on. Another day, they rode past the same cabbage patch again. This time, Akbar made a face and said, "Cabbage is such a tasteless vegetable. How do people eat it?" Birbal replied, "Yes, Huzoor, it is difficult to even look at such a tasteless vegetable." Akbar heard him and they went on. After a while, Akbar remembered something. He said, "Birbal, I don't understand you. Last time, we passed through this patch, you said that the cabbage was the king of vegetables and today you say that 'It is even difficult to look at such a tasteless vegetable? What do you mean by that?" Birbal said bowing, "Huzoor, I am your servant, not the cabbage's."

221 Birbal identifies the Guest

Once, Birbal was invited for dinner by a rich man. When Birbal reached, he found himself in a large crowd. The host greeted him warmly and took him inside. Birbal said, "I did not know that there will be so many guests in this gathering." The host replied

politely, "They are not guests, Sir. They are all my employees except for one who is the only other guest here besides you. Can you tell who is that other guest here?" "Maybe I could. Tell them a joke, and I will observe them." Said Birbal. The rich man told a joke, and everybody laughed heartily. It was one of the worst jokes Birbal had ever heard. Now the rich man asked Birbal, "I have told the joke, now you tell me who the other guest is?" Birbal pointed out towards a man and said, "He is that other guest." The rich man was very surprised. How did he recognise the other guest? He said to him, "You are right Sir, but how did you guess?" Birbal said, "Because only employees can laugh at such a poor joke. He was the only person who did not even smile at your joke, so I immediately recognised him as the other guest."

222 Birbal's sweet Reply

Emperor Akbar used to ask his courtiers many odd questions to amuse himself. One day, he asked his courtiers "What punishment should be given to a person who pulls my moustache?" One said, "He should be beheaded!" Another said, "He should be flogged!" Yet another said, "He should be hanged!" "What do you think, Birbal?" asked the emperor. Birbal kept quiet for a moment and then said, " Huzoor, he should be given sweets." "What, Birbal? Have you gone crazy? Do you know what you are saying?" Birbal replied politely, "I am not crazy, Jahaanpanaah. And I know what I am saying." "Then how can you talk like this?" emperor asked in anger. Birbal again replied politely, "Because, Huzoor, the only person who can dare to do this is your grandson." So pleased was Akbar that he gave his ring to Birbal.

223 Truth & Falsehood

Emperor Akbar's court was famous for its witty question-answer sessions. Once, Akbar asked his courtiers if they could tell the difference between truth and falsehood in three words. All courtiers got busy finding out the three words or less to tell the difference. But enough time passed and they could not tell. "What about you, Birbal?" " Huzoor!" Birbal looked around and replied, "Four fingers" Akbar got surprised and asked him, "How, Birbal?" Because

what your eyes see is truth, and what your ears hear, more "often than not, may be false." "That is right, but then why do you say 'four fingers?'" asked Akbar. Birbal bowed a little and said, "Because Huzoor, only four fingers is the distance between ear and eye." Akbar was very astonished to hear the reply.

224 A little lesser & a little more

One day, Birbal's five-year-old daughter accompanied him to the Royal Court. When Emperor Akbar saw her, he decided to test her wits to see if she had her father's intelligence. He began talking to her. "Do you know Persian, O little girl?" "A little less and a little more, Sir," the girl replied. Birbal smiled, but Akbar could not understand, so he asked Birbal to explain. Birbal said, "She knows Persian a little more than those who do not know Persian and knows a little lesser than those who know Persian well." Akbar now knew that she had the same wits as her father had.

225 The noblest Beggar

One day, Emperor Akbar asked Birbal, "Birbal, is it possible to be the noblest and the lowest together?" Birbal said, "Yes, Huzoor." "Then bring me such person." Birbal went and returned next day with a beggar and presenting him to Akbar said, "He is the lowest among all of your subjects, Huzoor." Akbar said, "Good, that may be true, but I don't see that how he can be the noblest!" "He has been given the honour of having an audience with the emperor and that makes him the noblest amongst beggars, Huzoor." Akbar was very happy to hear the answer that he gave lots of money to the beggar.

226 What Sun & Moon can't see

During his court, Emperor Akbar asked, "What is that thing which Sun and Moon can't see but others can." After a long murmur of discussion, his courtiers looked at their emperor clueless. Then Birbal stood up and said, "It is darkness, Huzoor." As usual, Akbar was all praise for Birbal, while the other courtiers grinded their teeth.

227 Birbal betrays himself

One day, Birbal happened to comment on Emperor Akbar's sense of humour. But Akbar got very angry with Birbal and ordered him to not only leave the court, but also the city of Agra, his capital. Birbal was terribly hurt but could not do anything about it. So he left. But then, Akbar started missing him. He wanted him back in the court. He could not find him because he didn't know his whereabouts, and no one else did too. One day, an intelligent Sage came to the court and told him the way to search for him. Now Akbar did as the Sage told him. He announced that he would give one thousand gold coins to the person who would come to his court, half in sunshine and half in shade. Next day, a villager came carrying a string cot over his head and claimed the money. He said, "I am half in sun and half in shade." Akbar understood that this man could not have had this idea by himself. On interrogation, he confessed that Birbal suggested this plan to him. Akbar was very happy to hear this. He asked him about the whereabouts of Birbal and immediately ordered him to come back to his court. And they had a happy reunion.

228 The Washerman & the Potter

Once, a washerman's donkey entered a potter's yard and broke all the pots. The potter beat the poor donkey badly. The washerman rushed to its rescue. He paid for the broken pots, but the potter was still angry. He went to Emperor Akbar and said, "Your Imperial Majesty, the Shah of Iran says that his elephants are white and clean, while ours are black and dirty. Sire, the Shah's washermen clean his elephants daily." Akbar declared, "All the washermen in Agra must wash our elephants." "Sire, my neighbour washes very well. He can scrub all our elephants," said he. So the washerman was called. He scrubbed all day long but the elephants still remained black. He realised the potter's trick and went to seek Birbal's help. The next day, Akbar scolded the washerman, but he said, "Sire, I need a huge pot to dip the elephants while cleaning them." Akbar asked the potter to build a large pot. But when the elephant stepped into it, it broke. Angered, Akbar ordered for another pot. The potter knew he had been outwitted and begged pardon. Then, Akbar asked the washerman, "Who gave you this idea to outsmart the potter?" "Sire, it was Birbal," said he. Akbar was very pleased with Birbal.

229 Four Fools

Once, Emperor Akbar asked Birbal to bring four high-quality fools to him. He said, "It will not be too difficult because this world is full of fools. Birbal said fine and asked for some time to find them, which Akbar readily gave to him. Now Birbal started looking for fools. He was going somewhere when he saw a man carrying a large plate with some clothes, betel leaves and sweets placed on it. He looked like a fool, so Birbal asked, "Where are you going carrying this?" The man replied, "My wife has remarried. Now they have a child, so I am taking this gift for them." Birbal was convinced that he was a fool, so he considered him as a candidate to take to the emperor. Another time, he saw a man riding a buffalo while carrying a bundle of grass on his head. Birbal asked him, "Why are you carrying this bundle on your head?" The man replied, "My buffalo is pregnant, so I thought that she should not carry too much load." Birbal considered him also a candidate to take to the emperor. Next morning he took these people to Akbar's court and presented them to him as the biggest fools. "But these are only two fools; where are the other two? I asked you to bring four fools," asked Akbar. Birbal folded his hands and bending a little said, "Huzoor, the third fool is you who asked me to bring the fools and the fourth fool is me who has brought these fools for you." Akbar was in splits and praised Birbal endlessly.

230 Just One Question

One day, when Emperor Akbar and Birbal were in court, a scholar paid visit and challenged Birbal- "If you answer my question, I will also salute your wits." The scholar wanted to know if Birbal was really as sharp-minded as he was praised to be. Birbal said, "Ask your question, Gentleman. Your challenge is now a matter of my prestige." The scholar finally laid out his question- "I have got two choices for you: Either answer a hundred easy questions or one difficult question. What do you choose?" As Akbar and Birbal had had a long engaging day, they were only looking forward to resting in their homes. So, Birbal agreed on the one difficult question. The scholar asked, "Who came first—the chicken or the egg?" In no times Birbal answered, "The chicken." The scholar was astonished to hear that- "How can you say that?" "Look, Gentleman. We agreed upon only one difficult question which I think I have answered; so no second question, please," replied Birbal. And Akbar and Birbal left the court, both smiling, caring less about looking back at the scholar. While the still astonished scholar kept looking at Birbal's back. May be he was wishing that Birbal turned back so that he could salute to him as promised!

231 Emperor Akbar's Mahabharata

Once, Birbal brought the Mahabharata for Emperor Akbar. A few days later, Akbar said, "You must write an Akbari Mahabharata, Birbal." Birbal wondered, "A great sage wrote Mahabharata. How can I equal this feat?" He thought for a while and said, "Huzoor, I need two months and fifty thousand gold coins." Akbar agreed to give him the money. With some of it, Birbal bought some papers and donated the rest of the money to the Brahmins. After two months, Akbar asked, "Is the book ready yet, Birbal?" "Almost," said Birbal. "Ten brahmins are helping me in the task. I need some more money to ask five more." Akbar agreed. Having bound up all the papers, Birbal returned to the court in a month. "The book is ready. But first, I must see the queen," pleaded he. So he went to the queen, who was delighted to see the book. Then Birbal said, "Your Highness, according to this story, you should also have five husbands like Draupadi and must suffer the same fate as she did." The queen became angry. "What rubbish! Burn that book now!" ordered she. Birbal slipped out to inform Akbar. He was shocked when he heard about it. Then Birbal said, "Huzoor, every age has a new story to tell." Akbar understood and praised Birbal.

232 The stolen Bottle

Once, Emperor Akbar went to his wives. He said, "Each of you is to tell me a silly tale. The one who tells the silliest will be rewarded." When Birbal overheard him, he thought, "Something is not right. The emperor doesn't make such silly demands." Birbal decided not to visit the court. So, Akbar went to meet him, but Birbal had gone outside. His daughter received the emperor. Meanwhile, Birbal went to Akbar's room in the palace. There he saw many wine bottles lying in the cupboard! Birbal understood the reason behind the emperor's silly behaviour. Birbal picked up a bottle of wine and left. On the way, he met Akbar. "Birbal, where have you been?" asked Akbar, "And what are you hiding in the shawl?" Birbal replied, that it was nothing. "It's a parrot!" he said. "It's a horse... No, it's an elephant... Actually, it's a donkey," muttered

Birbal. Akbar got angry. Then Birbal took the wine bottle out. They went to the palace. There Akbar saw a bottle missing from his cupboard. He knew that Birbal had taken it. He asked Birbal about it. "Huzoor, when I said I had nothing, I meant that wine affects our senses," said Birbal, explaining his riddle. "When I said 'parrot', I meant that one behaves like a parrot. At the third cup, one acts like a horse. At the fourth cup, like an elephant, and like a foolish donkey at the fifth cup." Akbar acknowledged Birbal's reason and threw away all the wine bottles.

233 Birbal in Burma

Hussain Khan, Emperor Akbar's brother-in-law, was desperate to occupy Birbal's post. Akbar sent Hussain with Birbal to deliver a letter to the King of Burma. The letter read- 'Hang the two ministers at full moon.' Birbal asked Hussain to follow his advice if he wanted to remain alive. At the time of execution, Hussain requested the Burman king to hang him first. Birbal interrupted to be hanged first. The king was quiet puzzled as to why the two men were this excited to die first and enquired about it. Birbal replied, "The one who dies on such auspicious night is believed to be born as the king of Burma in next birth." The king wanted his own son to succeed him, so he freed the two ministers. Thus, Hussain accepted Birbal's might and gave up his desire to take over his position.

234 Birbal passes the Test

One afternoon, a scholar having proficiency in various subjects appeared in the court of Emperor Akbar. The scholar humbly requested the emperor to allow him to test the intelligence of his courtiers. Akbar granted the permission, and the contest was scheduled for the next day. On the appointed day, poets, ministers and advisors gathered in the court. The scholar brought a pot covered with a fine cloth. He asked the courtiers, "Can anyone tell me what is in this pot?" Everyone started scratching their head. No one was able to guess what was in the pot. Then Birbal stood up from his seat; he uncovered the pot, peeped inside, and said, "There is nothing inside the pot. It is empty." The scholar was disgruntled; he said, "But you opened it!" Birbal said, "But you never said not to open it." The scholar accepted his defeat and took Akbar's leave. Thus the smart minister solved the mystery of the pot without an effort.

235 The Queen's Victory

Once, Emperor Akbar was chatting with his queen. He remarked, "Birbal is the most prized jewel of my court. He is unchallenged in wit and intelligence." The queen laughed and said, "In wit, I can defeat Birbal any day." Akbar asked her to prove it. Birbal was summoned. The queen called the maid and asked for sherbet and sweets to be brought in. Then she counted till ten and said, "Now, the sherbet and the sweets are ready. Here they come." Just as she said this, the maid entered with the dishes. The queen said to Birbal, "Did you notice that just as I finished counting, the refreshments arrived? We will come to your house for lunch tomorrow." Birbal bowed and left. Akbar asked her why she did not prove herself. "Wait for tomorrow, " said she, smiling. The next day, at Birbal's house, the queen said, "Surely lunch is ready, Birbal. Now count and tell me exactly when the dishes will come, just as I did yesterday." Smiling, Birbal said, "Highness, I ask you to count and lunch will arrive." The queen agreed. When she stopped counting, the servants entered with the dishes, just as they had been told by Birbal. The queen admitted Birbal's victory. But Birbal said to the queen, "You have won, Your Highness, for the lunch arrived when you stopped counting!" "How clever, Birbal!" said the queen, "You made me win even when I lost." Akbar had a hearty laugh.

236 What I desire

There lived a foolish miser who kept all his money hidden in a large box in a corner of his home. One day, a fire broke out in his house. As the fire grew in strength, he cried out louder. His neighbours rushed towards his home carrying buckets of water. "All my wealth lies there in a box," wept he. A greedy goldsmith overheard him and said, "I'll go and get the box for you but only on one condition - After I get the box, I'll give you only what I desire. The rest is mine." The desperate miser hastily agreed. The goldsmith jumped into the flames. Soon he returned with the box. He said, "You promised me that I could give you what I desire. Here, take the box. Rest all mine." "That's unfair. You can keep half my savings, but I will take the other half," said the miser. But the goldsmith would not listen. They argued for some time. Then the miser and the goldsmith decided

to go to Birbal for justice. Birbal thought for a while and said, "Goldsmith, you promised the miser what you desire. What do you desire?" asked Birbal, carefully. "The gems and the coins," replied the goldsmith immediately. "Then, these are the miser's as you promised to give him what you desire," said Birbal. Realising that he had been tricked, the goldsmith returned everything to the miser.

237 The most beautiful Child

Emperor Akbar adored his grandson as the most beautiful child in the entire kingdom. But Birbal believed that every child is beautiful to their parents. Akbar disbelieved it and ordered his courtiers to bring a child, more handsome than his grandson, to the court. Next day, Birbal informed that he had a gorgeous child in his eyes but his mother refused to send him along. Akbar insisted on being taken to the child. When there, he found the child playing in the mud with very unattractive features. Akbar was stunned and said that he had never seen such an ugly child. The mother of the child overheard it and fumed at them. She then kissed her son and took him inside. By this, Akbar learnt that to every parents their child is the most beautiful.

238 Birbal caught the Thief

It so happened once, that a rich merchant's house was robbed. The merchant suspected that the thief was one of his servants. So he went to Birbal and mentioned the incident. Birbal went to his house and assembled all his servants and asked who had stolen the merchant's things. No one owned up. Birbal thought for a moment, then gave a stick of equal length to each servants and said that the stick of the actual thief would be longer by two inches the next day. All the servants must be present again tomorrow with their sticks. The servants went to their homes and gathered at the same place the next day. Birbal asked to show their sticks. One of the servants had his stick shorter by two inches. Birbal said, "This is your thief, merchant." Later the merchant asked Birbal, "How did you catch him?" Birbal said, "The thief had already cut his stick short by two inches in the night fearing that his stick will be longer by two inches by morning."

239 Who is the greatest Fool?

Emperor Akbar asked Birbal to make a list of all the fools in Agra. One day, a foreign merchant came to Akbar with an extraordinary horse. The merchant informed that he had plenty of such horses with him but could not afford the cost of transportation. Being fond of horses, Akbar handed him a bag of thousand gold coins. The merchant left with a promise to show up with the horses soon. When Birbal came to know of it, he went to Akbar with his list of fools. Akbar saw his name on the top and was very angry with Birbal. Birbal then explained that the emperor was fool enough to trust a stranger with such a princely amount. When Akbar asked what if the merchant fulfilled his words, Birbal replied that he would strike out the emperor's name and write his own in that case.

240 Red-Hot Test

Hassan was accused of stealing a necklace. The accuser took him to the court of Emperor Akbar where Hassan kept pleading innocent. In order to prove Hassan's virtue, the spiteful accuser asked him to hold a red-hot iron with his bare hands. Jittering Hassan requested for some time from Akbar and went straight to Birbal. After two days, Hassan showed up. He said that he was ready to take the hot iron test provided the demander should perform the same. Now the accuser was left speechless. He hung his shoulder and withdrew his charges against Hassan.

241 Pickled Clue

A man decided to go on a pilgrimage. But he was reluctant to carry his life's earnings along with him. Hence, he kept all the wealth in an earthen jar and tied it up with a piece of cloth. He asked his neighbour to take care of the jar until he returned from his journey. The neighbour agreed. The man left for his pilgrimage and after six months, he returned and went to see his neighbour. He asked for the jar. The neighbour brought the jar and handed it over to the man. The man opened the jar and got shocked to find it filled with mango pickle instead of his wealth. He said politely, "I gave the money to you in this jar, now it contains pickle!"

The neighbour said, "I don't know anything about your money. Whatever you gave to me I kept it, and now only I am bringing it to you." The man was deeply saddened and went to Birbal for justice. The neighbour was called upon. Birbal asked the neighbour, "Where is the money which was kept in this jar?" The neighbour replied, "I have already told that I do not know anything about the money kept in this jar. I have never opened it. I kept it as it was and took it out as it was." Then Birbal called some women from the royal kitchen and asked them, "How old is this pickle?" They examined and said, "It is definitely not six months old, Sir. It is very new – perhaps a month old only." Everything fell into place. The neighbour was arrested for his wrongdoing. He returned all the money he had taken from the jar.

242 The Parrot neither eats nor drinks

Emperor Akbar was extremely fond of his talented parrot. He made sure that it received all the care and protection. Unfortunately, the parrot died. The servants were scared to break the horrible news to the emperor and sought advice from the wise minister Birbal. Birbal assured help. Once alone with Akbar, Birbal with much reluctance said, "Huzoor, I don't know what has happened to your parrot: He is neither eating anything nor speaking nor moving his feathers nor opening his eyes..." Akbar thundered, "What!! Has the parrot died?" Birbal replied, "I never said it." Akbar understood why Birbal had to say it in this manner. Though he was upset, still Birbal's wits didn't fail to cheer him.

243 Hunting & the Dowry

Emperor Akbar had a passion for hunting. One day, he went to a nearby jungle to hunt. Birbal—his intelligent minister—also accompanied him. Suddenly, they heard two owls quarreling fiercely. Akbar became curious. He asked Birbal, "Birbal, what are these owls saying? Why are they quarreling so loudly?" Birbal replied, "Huzoor! Both of them are settling a dowry amount. The first one, who is groom's father, is saying that he wants to take forty jungles in the dowry, with no animals at all. The other owl, who is bride's father, is saying that he can arrange only twenty jungles at the moment." Just then, another owl hooted even more loudly. Akbar asked Birbal, "Now what is he saying?" Birbal said, "Now he is saying that if you wait for six months more, I can give you forty jungles without animals." Akbar understood the meaning of Birbal's words: 'Do not kill animals', so he gave up hunting altogether.

244 Akbar's Ring

Akbar was taking a stroll in a garden situated at the outskirts of the city. While walking, his favourite ring suddenly fell into a dry well. Akbar was very sad. Now the question arose of how to take the ring out. Birbal, who was with the emperor when it happened, volunteered. He said, "Huzoor! If you give me some time, I can take your ring out of this well." Akbar had no alternative, so he consented. After some time, Birbal brought some fresh cow-dung and threw it on the ring. He then tied a stone on one end of a string and holding the other end in his hand, he threw the stone on the cow-dung. He waited for a long time – for the cow dung to dry. Then, he pulled the string out of the well. The string brought the stone which was stuck into the cow-dung which had the emperor's ring at its bottom. Akbar beamed at Birbals intelligence.

245 Birbal saves an Astrologer

There lived an astrologer who claimed that he could foresee the future accurately. When the news of the astrologer's super ability reached Emperor Akbar, he decided to check for himself. The astrologer was summoned to the court. Akbar asked him, "I have heard that you can predict the future?" The astrologer was trembling like a leaf." "Come on, answer my question. If that is true, then tell me 'When will you die?'" asked Akbar. The astrologer said that he would have to consult his charts before predicting the exact answer. So the emperor granted him an hour. The astrologer had got the hint that he would soon be in hot water. He wasted no time and went straight to Birbal. On meeting Birbal, the astrologer gave the whole account to him. Birbal advised him on what his reply must be before the emperor. At the given time, the astrologer showed up in the court and told Akbar, "My Lord! I will die exactly three days before you." Akbar realised that he was bluffing, so he refrained from getting into further discussions and let the astrologer go. Thus, Birbal saved the astrologer's life.

246 Birbal helps a Pundit

A pundit named Kishore came to Birbal with an unusual problem. Kishore told him, "My father was a respectable pundit. People acknowledged him as 'Punditji'. I myself am a very good pundit, yet nobody calls me 'Punditji'." He also added that though he was

content with his work, life and income, still he aspired that everyone should recognise him as 'Punditji'. It was a very simple case for Birbal. He asked the pundit to follow his advise word by word. Kishore agreed. Birbal said, "Whenever somebody calls you Punditji, you show anger and shout loudly; that is all." The following morning, Birbal visited the locality where Kishore lived. There he interacted with the children. He learnt that children didn't like Kishore because he scolded them. So he told them, "If you call that man "Punditji, Punditji", he will get irritated, and you can also take your revenge like this." The children happily agreed. From then on, the children started calling Kishore "Punditji, Punditji", and Kishore every time yelled at them. In few days, he stopped reprimanding the kids. His aim was fulfilled - Because of the continuous banter by the children, other people also started calling him "Punditji". Now Kishore was a happy man with the title 'Punditji' stuck to him.

247 Heavy Burden

A poor woman came to Birbal pleading for help. The minister greeted her with respect and enquired about the purpose of her visit. The woman narrated that Emperor Akbar had ordered to construct a building on the land where her house was. She was not willing to part from her ancestral home. Birbal advised her to be patient and assured his assistance. The construction began. One day, Birbal along with Akbar came to visit that site for inspection. Many gunny bags were lying near a pile of mud. Birbal had an idea. He immediately started filling the gunny bags with mud. Seeing him, Akbar asked, "Why are you doing this, Birbal?" Birbal replied, "To earn merit for my next life." Affected by his statement, Akbar decided to join him. After they were finished with some bags, Birbal requested Akbar to help him lift one of the gunny bags filled with mud. "Oh, it is very heavy!" said Akbar, lifting the bag. Birbal said, "Imagine, Huzoor, when only one bag is so heavy, how much mud will weigh in this piece of land. Will it not weigh heavily on your conscience?" Akbar realised his mistake and ordered to stop construction at once.

248 Akbar's Dream

One night, Emperor Akbar could not sleep well. He had an awful dream in which he saw that all his teeth had fallen down except one. The next day, in order to decode the real meaning of the vision, Akbar called upon all the astrologers. The astrologers sat to interpret the meaning of the dream. After much contemplation, they finally concluded that

it meant- "All of his relatives will die before him." The finding saddened Akbar. He dismissed the meeting without giving anything to the astrologers. He got restless. He was sincerely concerned about his relatives. The whole day passed, but Akbar could not find peace. In the evening, Birbal came. Akbar narrated the entire account to his minister. Birbal thought for a minute and said, "This means, Huzoor, you will live a longer and more fulfilled life than any of your relatives." Akbar was calmed and delighted to hear this and rewarded Birbal heavily.

249 The sharpest Sword & the strongest Shield

One afternoon, a man from a foreign land appeared before Emperor Akbar. The man was a blade-smith. He declared pompously- "Your Imperial Majesty, nobody can make shields and spears like mine. My shields are so strong that nothing can pierce them, and my spears are so sharp that there is nothing they cannot pierce." Hearing this, the wisest minister at the court of Akbar could not keep silent. Birbal said, "I can prove you wrong in one count." The man announced- "Impossible!" Birbal said smilingly, "Okay, hold up one of your shields and I will pierce it with one of your spears." The man was left speechless.

250 Birbal's Khichdi

One winter, Emperor Akbar and Birbal were taking a walk in the palace garden. Suddenly, a thought crossed Birbal's mind. He said to Akbar, "A man can do anything for money." Akbar thought for a moment, and then he dipped his finger into the ice cold water of a nearby pond. He pulled his finger out immediately and affirmed that no person would take the pain to stand in this freezing water the whole night for money. Birbal said that he could prove his claim right and would find such a man. Akbar refused to believe and accepted the challenge with a promise to give two thousand gold coins to that man. The next day, Birbal brought a man to fight the challenge. The man was very poor and thin. "Good!" said the emperor and sent him to the pond. He also sent some guards after him to check whether he was truly taking up the challenge. The next day, the man came back to claim his prize. Akbar checked with the guards who also substantiated his claim. Akbar asked him to reveal the mystery behind his feat. The man said, "Your Imperial Majesty, there was a lamp post at some distance. I just gazed at it the whole night. The heat of that lamp was my only hope." Akbar denied the prize money saying, "You

say you could manage to stand the cold because you were kept warm by the heat of some distant lamp! You think I am foolish?" Crestfallen, the poor man went away. When Birbal learnt about the happening, he was disappointed with Akbar. He was missing from the court next day. Akbar got worried and sent for Birbal. The guard returned to inform Akbar that Birbal was cooking khichdi and would come to the court only after having his food. Akbar waited. Several hours passed, but Birbal didn't show up. Curious Akbar decided to see for himself. So he went to Birbal's house. There he saw the minister making khichdi in a pot hung 8-10 feet above the fire. Seeing this, the visitors broke into laughter. Akbar said to him, "Birbal, you can't cook your khichdi in this way. It is not getting enough heat to be cooked." Birbal said, "Huzoor, if that distant lamp can keep that poor man warm to stand in cold water all night, then why can't my khichdi be cooked this way?" Akbar was ashamed of what he had done to the poor man. He called him the next day and handed him his two thousand gold coins.

251 Neither here nor there

The courtiers of Emperor Akbar resented him because he always admired Birbal over them. They were filled with jealousy towards Birbal and looked for some way or the other to let him down. One such day at the court, when Akbar was again applauding Birbal for his brilliance, one courtier could not take it any more. He got up and said to the emperor, "Huzoor—with all due respect to you—you always assign significant work to Birbal. We are not complaining, but we believe that our capabilities are being ignored, which is hurtful. We can also do what Birbal can, at least give us a chance." Akbar said, "Fine, let me assign you something. I want you to come near me." That courtier went near the emperor. He said, "Here, I give you three rupees. Go and buy three things of one rupee each. The first thing should be of "here", the second should be of "there", and the third should be of "neither here nor there". The puzzled courtier went to the market with the three rupees. He went into a shop and asked the shopkeeper for what Akbar had asked him to bring. The shopkeeper laughed loudly- "Where in the world can you get these things?" Tired of searching, the courtier at last returned to Akbar— empty-handed. "Huzoor, I could not get these things anywhere at any price. So if Birbal can bring them, we too will consider him great." Birbal accepted the challenge and said, "They will be here tomorrow." Now the day came. Akbar reminded Birbal of his task as he entered the court. Birbal said, "I have not forgotten the challenge, Huzoor. As I had committed, I have brought those today: Yes, Huzoor, the first rupee I gave to a beggar. So it reached God—there, because if you give to

the poor, it obliges God Himself. With the second rupee, I bought some sweets; hence, it was used here; and the third rupee I spent in playing dice; hence, it was used neither here (the world) nor there (the other world). All courtiers were astonished to hear Birbal's logic. And Akbar once again rewarded Birbal greatly because he had proved to his grudging courtiers that he was right in putting Birbal over them.

252 Full Moon, quarter Moon

Birbal was invited as a royal guest to Persia. Celebrations and lavish gifts were offered to Birbal. When it was time for him to leave for home, a nobleman asked him as how he would compare the King of Persia with his own emperor. Birbal replied, "Your King is the full moon, whereas mine could be like a quarter moon." The Persians were pleased to hear this analogy. When Birbal got home, he found an enraged Akbar ready to thunder on him. Akbar demanded angrily- "How could you belittle your own emperor? You are a traitor!" Birbal said politely, "No, Huzoor, no. I can never belittle you. What I said there meant: "The full moon diminishes and disappears onward, while the quarter moon grows gradually day by day. What I, in fact, wanted to tell the world was that your power is growing day by day, while the King of Persia's is about to decline." Akbar was delighted with the response and embraced Birbal with open arms.

253 The three Questions

Birbal was one of the most trusted ministers of Emperor Akbar. Hence, he received lots of flak from other courtiers. One day, these envious courtiers conspired to humiliate Birbal before the emperor. On an occasion, Akbar praised Birbal lavishly. This aggravated the fire, and the green-eyed courtiers proposed a contest to examine Birbal's intelligence. They would throw three questions at Birbal. If he failed to answer them correctly, he would have to resign from his post. Akbar immediately accepted the challenge as he was certain that Birbal would come out with flying colours. The three questions were-

1. How many stars are there in the sky?
2. Where is the centre of Earth?
3. How many men and women are there in the world?

The clever aristocrat was quick to smell the air of jealousy amongst his counterparts. Though infuriated, Birbal kept his cool. He reflected over the questions for a while. To the first question, Birbal brought a sheep and said, "There are as many stars in the sky as there are hair on this sheep's body. My friend, the courtier, is welcome to count them if he likes." To answer the second question, Birbal drew a couple of lines on the floor and bore an iron rod in between and said "This is the centre of the Earth. The courtier may measure it himself if he doubts." In answer to the third question, Birbal said, "Counting the exact number of men and women in the world would be a problem as there are some specimens like our courtier friends here who cannot easily be identified as either. Therefore if all people like him are killed, only then can one count the exact number of men and women." Akbar was overjoyed with the reply, while the courtiers hung their heads in shame.

254 Protection of the Footmark of an Elephant

One day, Emperor Akbar had a heated argument with Birbal. The latter decided to withdraw from his designation and left the empire. Birbal then settled down in a neighbouring village with a different identity. Since Birbal's vacant position could not be left empty, Akbar unwillingly appointed his brother-in-law as the new chief minister, at his wife's persuasion. But news of frequent inadequacies flew in from every corner of the empire. Akbar decided to test the intelligence skill of his brother-in-law. One day, during a customary round of his territory, Akbar saw a footmark of an elephant. He asked his brother-in-law to protect that mark for three days. Then he left. His brother-in-law started vigilance around it for three days. During this period, he was left hungry and weak. Three days passed. The fourth day he went to the emperor and told him everything. Unhappy with the present minister, Akbar made up his mind to bring Birbal back. He made an announcement that due to some administrative dispute, the landlords of nearby villages should come to him with their wells. If failed, they would have to pay a fine of 10,000 rupees. The invitation left everyone in distress. When the news reached Birbal's ears, he quickly got the hint of the message. He went to the troubled landlords and assured help. Next day, Birbal along with the landlords and some servants arrived in Delhi. But they refused to enter the city and informed the emperor through messengers- "Your Imperial Majesty, according to your orders, we are here with our wells, kindly send your wells to welcome them." When Akbar heard this, he understood that Birbal was there. He quickly ordered his people to welcome Birbal with great pomp & show. Birbal regained his position. After this, Akbar asked Birbal to protect the footmark of the elephant. Birbal agreed. He fixed an iron bar near the footmark and tied

a 50-yard rope to it and told the villagers that whosoever's house should fall inside the perimeter of this rope, that house would indeed be demolished to protect the footmark. People requested him with alternatives and gave him bribes to save their houses. Thus, he collected approximately one lac. He deposited that money in the royal treasury and briefed the emperor. Akbar called his brother-in-law and said to him, "You were hungry for three days and gained nothing, but Birbal has earned one lac in a single day! That is why you can never be my chief minister." The brother-in-law cut a sorry figure and left the place at once.

255 Birbal turns Tables

One morning, Emperor Akbar was having his customary sitting at his court. Just then, a playful idea sprang up in his head. He began narrating his dream to his courtiers. In the dream, Akbar and Birbal were walking towards each other. It being very dark, the two collided with each other and fell down. The emperor continued- "Fortunately for me, I fell into a sea of custard, but guess where Birbal fell into?" Courtiers asked curiously, "Where, Your Imperial Majesty?" "In a gutter!" The full house broke into laughter. Akbar was thrilled that for once he had been able to score over Birbal. Birbal was placid. When the laughter subsided, he stood up and said, "Huzoor, strangely enough, I too had the same dream; but unlike you, I slept on till the end. When you climbed out of that pool of delicious custard and I out of that stinking gutter, we discovered that there was no water to clean ourselves. So guess what we did?" Akbar asked, "What?" Birbal said smilingly, "We licked each other clean." Akbar became red with embarrassment and vowed never to let Birbal down again.

256 Birbal's Generosity

Birbal was travelling to a neighbouring town for some business. On the way, a man stopped him and began narrating his plight to him. The man informed the minister that he had walked 20 miles specially to have a word with him; and all along the way, people showered praises for Birbal and his generosity. The witty minister could foresee what was approaching. He sensed that the man was going to ask for money. So Birbal asked, "Are you going back the same way?" The man replied, "Yes Sir." Birbal asked again, "Will you do me a favour?" The man said, "Certainly... why not? What do you want me to do?" Birbal said, "Please deny the rumour of my generosity all the way back to your home." And Birbal walked away.

257 Birbal shortened the Road

Once, Emperor Akbar and his noblemen were travelling to a faraway land. The long and grueling journey exhausted Akbar, and he asked flippantly, "Can't anyone shorten this road for me?" Birbal said- "Yes, I can!" The other courtiers exchanged looks with one another. They were aware that there was no substitute path through the hilly terrain. Birbal's statement left them perplexed. Akbar said- "You can shorten the road!? Well, do it." And Birbal said, "Listen to this story I am going to tell you." Riding beside the Akbar's palanquin, he started narrating a very interesting tale – full of excitement and thrill. Akbar and all the others listening to it attentively were spellbound. In no time, they arrived at their destination. Akbar exclaimed, "Oh, we have reached, Birbal!" Birbal grinned- "Well, that is what you wanted, Huzoor – the road to be shortened."

258 Why is the Camel's Neck crooked?

Emperor Akbar was very impressed with Birbal's wisdom. So one day, Akbar promised him many gifts. But it so happened that several days passed, and there was no sign of gift. Birbal was very disappointed. He didn't know what to do. One day, when Akbar was taking a stroll on the riverbank with his dear minister Birbal, he happened to notice a camel. He asked Birbal, "Tell me, Birbal, why is the camel's neck crooked." Birbal thought that this was a good opportunity, so he said, " Huzoor, it might be possible that the camel has forgotten to fulfil his promise to somebody, and that is why his neck is crooked. Scriptures mention that whoever will forget their promises will have crooked neck. Akbar soon realised that he had promised to give some gifts to Birbal but had not yet done so. As soon as they arrived at the palace, Akbar gave him his due reward. So Birbal with his wisdom got what he wanted without asking for it.

259 Birbal's Choice

Emperor Akbar quizzed Birbal on what he would choose if he was given a choice between justice and a gold coin. "The gold coin," replied Birbal. Akbar was stunned. "You would prefer a gold coin to justice?" asked he, unbelievingly. "Yes, Huzoor," said Birbal. Those present in the house were left baffled by Birbal's display of stupidity, or rather greediness.

They were overjoyed since they had been trying to sully Birbal's image in the emperor's eyes, but without success. Now the opportunity came straight walking in and that too from the man himself. They started thanking their stars. "I would have been saddened if even a poor citizen of my empire had said this," continued Akbar, "But it coming from your mouth, has shocked and hurt me, both. I did not know you were so greedy, Birbal!" "One desires for what one does not have," defended Birbal himself, quietly. "You are aware that in our country, justice is available to everybody. Now when the justice is already available to me also and for I'm always short of money, I said I would choose the gold coin." Akbar was overwhelmed with the reply and rewarded Birbal with one thousand gold coins for his wisdom.

260 Hasty Judgement

One day, Emperor Akbar was riding near a mango grove. Suddenly, an arrow whizzed past his earlobe. The soldiers immediately came into action and caught the person behind this act. He was a young boy. When asked why he intended to kill the emperor, the frightened boy said he just wanted to knock down a mango from a high branch. The enraged Akbar was not ready to listen to him. He immediately ordered death penalty to the boy. A soldier tied up the boy to a mango tree and aimed his bow to shoot him down. Just then, Birbal appeared on the scene and shouted, "This is not fair! If you want to kill him in the same way as he tried to kill the emperor, then you will have to aim for a mango. And the arrow has to miss the mango and strike the boy." Hearing this, Akbar pondered. He realised that he made a hasty judgment. It would be unfair to punish the boy so cruelly. He ordered his soldiers to let the boy go. Thus Birbal saved an innocent boy.

261 Begum & Birbal

The Empress persuaded her emperor husband, Akbar, to appoint her brother in place of Birbal. She suggested an impossible task for Birbal that would enable the emperor to strip Birbal off his title. She asked her husband to order Birbal fetch her to him. Unwillingly, Akbar followed suit. Birbal was quick to smell conspiracy against him. While taking a stroll in the garden, Akbar asked Birbal to bring the Empress

to him. Birbal with the help of a messenger stood outside the Empress's room and began discussing about a woman and Emperor Akbar. The anxious Empress went running out of her room to the garden where Akbar was waiting. Meanwhile, Birbal walked upon smilingly. Now, the Empress also admitted that only Birbal was best suited for the job.

262 Those who cannot see

Once, while looking at a list of all the blind people in the city, Emperor Akbar said, "I see very few names on the list." Birbal said, "Huzoor, what about those who don't see even with eyes?" Akbar thought Birbal was joking. So, Birbal asked for a few days to prove his point. Next day, Birbal went to the marketplace and started weaving a cot. Everyone was curious to know what Birbal was doing, so they asked him. Birbal did not reply and simply wrote down their names. As the word spread around, more people came to see Birbal and asked him the same question. Birbal remained silent and asked his attendant to write down their names. Soon the news reached Akbar's ears. Even he was curious to know what Birbal was doing. So he went to the marketplace and saw Birbal weaving a cot. He also asked Birbal what he was doing. Ignoring the emperor, Birbal said, "That will be two hundred and fifty." "Birbal, answer me! What are you doing?" asked Akbar, angrily. "Huzoor, I am weaving a cot and also making a list of all the blind people," said Birbal. "Today two hundred and fifty people asked me what I was doing, even though I was weaving a cot in broad daylight." Akbar asked Birbal to show him the list. When he saw the list, he was surprised to see his name on it. "But why do you have my name here?" asked Akbar, angrily. "Because you also asked me what I was doing," said Birbal. Thus, Birbal, as usual, had the last word.

263 Birbal goes to Heaven

While making Emperor Akbar's beard, the malicious court-barber told him that last night he dreamt that the emperor's father was very lonely in heaven and sought a company of a man of humour. Being a true son, Akbar pleaded with Birbal to sacrifice himself. Now Birbal was in a cleft stick. In few days, he turned up and agreed only if he was buried

alive. He dug his own grave with a secret tunnel leading to one of the rooms of his house. Birbal was buried there. He remained in hiding for six months and returned with long beard and hair. He informed the horror-struck Akbar that his father also looked very shabby due to no barber in heaven. He asked him to send one up to him. Akbar realized his folly and sentenced the barber to death.

264 The Farmer & the Viper

Once upon a time, in a cold region, there lived a farmer. In the evening, he was returning home with his tool-bag. He was covered from head to toe with fur and wool. With strong knee-length leather boots, he exerted his way through the snow—eight months of the year, the farmer's city saw snowfall. While proceeding on his path, he saw a Viper freezing in the snow. Lest the reptile should shiver to death, the farmer took pity on it. He picked the Viper up carefully in his hands and placed it underneath his coat. After some time, when the warmth of the coat brought the Viper back to its senses, it bit the farmer—its saviour! The farmer let out a painful shriek and fell backwards. The poison was rising in his body. The more it rose, more blue the body got. A white froth was dribbling from a corner of his mouth. Before the farmer would take his last breath, he uttered these words: "One who is born to sting will never kiss. I embraced poison and now am dying of it." The farmer passed away with these words, and the Viper disappeared slithering into the bush.

265 The Ears of Corn

One day, Kishore accompanied his father to the field. There, he got curious over the stalks of bent over corn and enquired his father about it. His father suggested Kishore himself to find the answer. Thinking for a moment, he replied that the corn which stood tall are strong and healthy, whereas the bent over ones are weak and frail. Then the farmer took his son closer to the crop and explained, "Now look here son. This stalk is full of grain and is therefore heavy. It is bent over with modesty. As for this one, standing tall and upright, its head so proudly in the air, it has hardly any grain in it."

266 At the Supermarket

Anna and Danny went with their mother to a supermarket, to buy some goods. As the three reached, they came across a swarm of people, some standing and some moving here and there, looking intensively for their required item. "Let's buy some fruits first!" said the mother. "Here are some apples, Mum," said Danny. "And some grapes also, Mum," said Anna. The mother said, "Okay, okay, kids, we will buy them all. You have got some bags for you here in which you may put the fruits. Danny, go and get a trolley, while Anna puts all fruits in the bags. Then, we will put the bags in the trolley." Danny got the trolley and Anna put the bags in it. Then mother pushed it along around. "Let's see what else we need." "Ah, yes! Some nice bread," the mother said as she came at the Bread & Cakes Counter. Danny got tempted at the sight of the strawberry cakes and clamored to have one at once. The mother then made him understand, "No dear, you can only do buying here and not eat. Don't worry. Once we get back home, you will have the whole strawberry cake to enjoy." Afterwards, they picked some vegetables, eggs, milk, juices, chips and chocolates from the respective counters. Suddenly, Danny saw many lovely toys at the Toys Counter. He ran to a G.I.Joe placed in the middle and pulled it out. CRASH. The toys fell down. "I am v-very sorry," Danny said to the counter lady. She reverted, "It's all right. I hope you are not hurt. But be careful ahead. You may help me pick up the toys, though." Danny helped her put the toys back in place. Just then, Anna spotted a little boy sobbing. He was lost and unable to find his mother. Anna took him to the Ice-Cream Counter man and then they both, holding the little boy, went one row after another until they found his worried mother. She took her son up in the arms and thanked Anna and the man heartily. Anna turned back looking for Danny and Mum. She saw that Danny was looking at a van from the side door of the supermarket. The van was full of big boxes. Some men came with trolleys, put the boxes on them, and went back in. "This is how all the things come into the supermarket! A van brings them in boxes!" Danny said to Anna. "Ya, fine. Now let's go, Mum will be looking for us," said Anna. "There you are," said the mother. "I have got all the things I needed. Now we will pay the bill and go home." They went to the Cash Counter. There was a long queue. Soon, their turn came. "Help me, kids, take out all the things on the counter," said the mother. The Cash Counter man began calculating each item's cost. He gave the total bill to the mother, who then paid it. Danny and Anna helped her mother put all the things back in the bags. They went out, put the bags in their car, and drove home. "Going to supermarket is fun!!" said both the kids.

267 The Blind & the Lame

A blind man was walking on the road sensing his way forward with the help of a stick. Just then, he heard someone calling him— "Excuse me, Sir. Please stop!" These words came from his left. He stopped and turned to the man. "What's the matter? Why did you stop me?" "How would you see, Sir? But there is a pit a step away. You might fall," answered the man. The blind man replied, "Ever since I have lost my sight, I am very cautious about what lies ahead in my path. Thanks anyway, Friend." The lame man told the blind man that the path further was risky. There would start a dyke by the road, so he'd better be cautious. The blind man requested the lame man to help him. The lame man said, "How do I help you? I myself am lame. I can't even walk properly." The blind man said, "Sorry to hear it, Friend. That means both of us need help to reach across safely. You can't walk well and I can't see. You need legs and I need eyes. By God's grace, I am a strong man. If you sit on my shoulders and guide me with your eyes, my legs will be able to take you and me safely to the end point." The lame man readily agreed. He climbed on the blind man's shoulders. He kept telling him where to move and turn on the road to keep from falling into the dyke. With each other's help, they finally reached their destination safe. Before parting ways, the lame man said, "Can it not be possible that I be your eyes and you be my legs forever? If we have been able to cross this risky road together, we can also cross the difficult journey of life?" And the two men travelled on together to never separate from each other, ever.

268 The Boy & the Hazelnuts

There was once a little boy who was very gluttonous. Wherever he spotted anything to eat, his entire focus centered upon how to lay his hands on it. His mother was also fed up with him because meals would often finish before being served. Like everyday, the boy went to his tutor's house to receive his lessons. Entering the room, he found that the tutor had brought in a new pitcher which was overflowing with hazelnuts. The boy's mouth watered. Now his concentration was not on what the tutor taught but on how to eat the nuts. And the lucky boy got his chance. The tutor gave the boy a chapter to read till he was back after a few minutes. As soon as the tutor went out of the room, the boy darted to the pitcher. He pushed his chubby hand in and fisted as many nuts as he could. But when he wanted to take his hand out, he could

not. His fist had got stuck because of the narrow mouth of the pitcher. The boy burst into tears. The tutor came running on hearing the crying. He asked, "What happened? And what are doing with my pitcher?" The boy replied, "I am very sorry, Teacher. I just wanted to eat some hazelnuts but my hand is stuck inside. Boohoo..." The tutor said, "How can it be? Your hand is smaller than the mouth of the pitcher!" The boy, his cheeks drenched with innocent tears, said, "No, Teacher. My fist is bigger now as I am gripping too many nuts." The tutor smiled and said, "My dear child, drop half the nuts and your hand will be smaller again. Once it is out, you can put it in again and take the remaining half." The boy did exactly that. His tutor was right. The boy was able to pull his hand out easily. He was very happy. The tutor then taught the boy: "Desires being too many are as troublesome as being too less. Be moderate in your desires. Always take according to your capacity. Will you remember it, Son?" The boy gleefully replied, "Yes, Teacher!"

269 The Musicians

Once, there lived a father and son who were very talented drummers. They played at wedding ceremonies and thus earned their living. One day, they received an invitation to participate in a music festival. Both father and son were excited and hopeful. At the festival, the audience enjoyed their show so much that by the end of it, they had collected lots of gifts and money. The father and son were rejoicing as they had money which would last for quite a few months. They both slept peacefully that night and decided to travel back to their village early morning. On the way back, they had to cross a dense forest. As they were in the forest, the son started beating the drum. The father warned him to at once stop lest the robbers should take all away. But the son just wouldn't listen. Some thieves, who were hiding in the forest, heard the beating of the drums and tracked down the father and the son, and attacked them. Taking all their money, they ran away. "I told you to stop but you didn't listen. Your foolish pride changed our fortune into misfortune," scolded the father. "I am sorry, Father. I have learnt my lesson," said the son.

270 The Elm & the Vine

It is believed that if a vine, is married to an elm tree to support its growth, both the tree and the vine can overcome any harshness of the weather. A man, therefore planted an elm tree in his vineyard. Elm looked around to inspect his new house. The vineyard had many vines, namely Wild Grape, Common Ivy, Poison Ivy, Passion Fruit, Morning Glory, Honeysuckle, Cucumber, and the like. Though Elm was happy to see such a variety of beautiful vines around him, he was also sad as there were no other trees like him as yet. He knew that the owner of the vineyard would marry a vine to him tomorrow. He thought: "Why let someone else take this important decision of my life? This shall be a relationship of lifetime. So I'd better find someone for me before the owner does." Elm looked for the most beautiful vine in the yard to be his wife. To his good luck, he found that the most beautiful one was by his side only. A mesmerisingly beautiful Wisteria was growing in his left. Elm proposed to Wisteria, but she turned him down. The dejected Elm asked her the reason. She said, "I am so small and tender, and you are so huge. Your branches only will crush me to death." Elm said, "Why will I crush you? I love you. Tender vines are therefore married to the elms so that they take care of them with their strength. And one day you will have to marry some elm, then why not me?" Wisteria replied, "I don't want you and I don't want any other elm. I can take care of myself." Wisteria broke Elm's heart and turned away. On that very night, a hailstorm, battered the vineyard. Elm could protect himself being tall and powerful, but the delicale Wisteria could not cope and was left beaten down. As she cried out with pain, Elm said to her, "Now you know why a vine needs a huge tree like me. I gave you my heart and you broke it. Perhaps, Mother Nature brought this hailstorm to teach you a lesson." With the morning, also arrived the owner of the vineyard. He straightaway went to Elm and said, "It is your wedding today. You have so many choices. Choose one to be your wife." Elm was silent. Suddenly, he heard a sweet voice, "Will you marry me?" It was Wisteria proposing to Elm with tearful eyes. "Forgive me. I could not understand your love. But now I know you will be the best husband for me. Will you punish me by saying no?" Elm was beside himself with joy. The owner, who was watching their love story, happily married Wisteria to Elm. The other vines and the owner's family attended the wedding. And Elm and Wisteria—now man wife—lived long in love, defeating every enemy sent by Time.

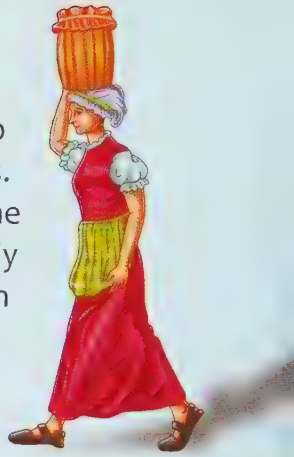
271 Gold's Gloom

There once lived a hermit. Every day, he would go out to beg for food. His alms-bowl was always filled with the delicious eatables people offered him. He would eat his fill and hang the alms-bowl, with the leftover food, on the wall for his servant. Now, a mouse lived in the hermit's hut. He used to nibble away the food that the hermit hung up from the peg. One day, the hermit saw the mouse eating the food. So, he started hanging the food even higher. But that did not help as the mouse always managed to reach it. Once, the Sadhu was visited by his friend. He told him about his problem. We must think of a way of getting rid of that mouse," said the friend. "Do you have any digging tools?" "Yes," the hermit said and brought out a pickaxe. "But why do you want this?" "I think that the mouse has wealth hidden in his hole. It is the smell of wealth that makes him and his companions so bold that they eat your food without the fear of getting caught. You should get up early in the morning and follow them," said the hermit. It was morning and the hermit followed the mouse. When he finally reached the mouse-hole, he began digging with a pickaxe. As he dug, he came across a hoard of gold coins! He took the entire hoard away. The mouse was furious and decided to get his treasure back. So that night, he started gnawing at the bag in which the treasure was kept. The hermit woke up and started hitting the mouse with a bamboo stick. The mouse somehow managed to flee and never returned to the house again. Thus, the hermit successfully got rid of the mouse and became rich too.

272 The Stream

Neal was walking on a country road. The hot day made him very thirsty. He chanced upon a stream oozing out from rocks. As he bent to drink from it, he remembered his father's words that he should not take cold water when his body is hot. But Neal hated to be a coward, so he drank many hands-cups of water. As he reached home, he felt very feeble and was soon down with fever. He said to his father, who was looking after him, "Papa, that stream is poisonous." The father explained, "Don't blame the stream, son. It is not poisonous. You are suffering because you disregarded my advice. By being brave, you can't change the fact, and the fact is that you should not have drunk cold water in sun. Don't show your bravery where it is not required. Now take this medicine and rest."

273 The Milkmaid & her Pail



There lies a small village in a green valley of Ireland. Surrounded by steep lands and crops of loveliest flowers, the village comprises of sixty six huts. Some twenty years ago, there lived a beautiful maiden in the village: Her name was Keturah. Her mother and father had passed away long back. She had only one brother —younger than her—who was working in the town. But, Keturah too had to have some occupation to manage the daily household expenses. She somehow bought two cows for herself. Every morning, she milked them and went out of the village to sell the milk. One such morning, Keturah was on her way to the market. She was carrying the pail of milk on her head. As she was walking, she began to think: "Today, I have a lot of milk to sell. It is thicker and sweet as well. Certainly, I am going to make a nice sum of money. With that money, I will buy some plump hens from Husbandman Greene. The hens will lay me many eggs. Then, I will start selling eggs also along with the milk. In this way, I will earn more money. I will renovate my house, plant a shrubbery of my favourite Cosmos Orange flowers. Yes, I will also own one cabriolet. In that case, I won't have to tire my legs daily. I will just get on it with my milk and eggs and will be in the market in one whip! I will have frocks made of best fabric. And when Kim is jealous of me, I will just jerk my face like this..." And Keturah jerked her face and the pail on her head fell down and broke. The entire milk spilt before her eyes. Keturah said, "I have paid well for my daydreaming." And the poor maiden turned back to her hut, without any income of the day.

274 The Fisherman & the Bagpipe

One afternoon, a fisherman went to a river to catch fishes. Apart from his fishing net, he also took his bagpipe along. He thought that the melodious music from the bagpipe would compel the fish to rise to the water level. He reached the river and sat at the riverbank. He now took his bagpipe out of his bag and began to play. After a few minutes, he stopped to check if any fish was on the surface yet, but there were none. He resumed playing the bagpipe, but not a single fish put its nose out of water. Annoyed, he took out his fishing net and cast it into the river. The net was filled with fishes as he took it out. He was amazed. He hung his fish-filled net on one shoulder and his bag on the other. Walking, he again took out his bagpipe and started playing. This

time, the breath-losing fish in the net hopped to the bagpipe music. The fisherman said to them, "Now you hear my music, huh?" One of the fish replied, "For now we are in your power, we must do as you bid us."

275 A Wolf is after all a Wolf

Kabeer was a teacher. He was a religious and kind-hearted man. His heart was filled with compassion for everyone. He admired and respected each creation of God. His gentle nature earned him many a student, who also loved him in return. One evening, Kabeer was going back to his house after school. He had to pass through forest-flanked route. A wolf suddenly appeared on his side. It must have come from the forest. For a few seconds, Kabeer was still with fear. He then felt that the wolf was only looking at him and seemed to have no inclination of attacking. On the contrary, Kabeer noticed a sort of softness in the wolf's eyes. He murmured, "Why is this dangerous carnivore looking at me so gently?" Kabeer was very surprised and moved by the gentle behaviour of the wolf. He decided to take the wolf home with him. He thought: "People make pet of harmless animals. By adopting a wolf as a pet, I will send a message across that, even a wild animal can be befriended with sheer love. I will teach this wolf so that it behaves socially with the humans." Kabeer brought the wolf to his house. He fed him well and made a cosy space for him to sleep. In the morning, Kabeer started teaching the wolf. He began with the English alphabet. He wrote on the blackboard: A for Apple, B for Ball, C for Chair, and asked the wolf to repeat after him. But the wolf could not understand what Kabeer tried to teach. But Kabeer didn't give up. He was determined to educate the animal. After few days, the wolf could now identify the English letters. It understood what an A, a B or a C was. But when Kabeer asked him to recite A for Apple, the wolf spoke "A for Attack". Kabeer said to the wolf, "No. I didn't say Attack but Apple. Now say B for Ball." And the wolf spoke "B for Blood". Kabeer got angry; he said, "What is wrong with you? Why are using these violent words? Just repeat after me. Say C for Chair." The wolf spoke "C for Chew". Kabeer rebuked the wolf but kept on teaching him. Like this, he reached to the letter L; and to it also, the wolf answered in "L for Lamb". Kabeer surrendered. He pushed the wolf out of his house forever. As he was watching the wolf going his way, he said, "Foolish me! I tried to mellow down a wolf. But—I forgot that 'a wolf is after all a wolf'."

276 Kevin & the Elephant

One afternoon, Kevin was whistling about in the woods. He was humming to himself and was mindless of his surroundings. Suddenly, he fell into a big hole prepared by the hunters to catch elephant. Kevin tried his best to get himself out but to no avail. The hole was too deep for him to climb across. Finding no way out, Kevin started crying for help. After some time, an elephant appeared hearing Kevin's shouting. He asked him, "Hey Boy! What are you doing down there?" "Can't you see the sky is falling down? The whole sky is turning grey. It means the whole sky is about to fall!" lied Kevin. "Really! What should I do?" the elephant asked Kevin. "Maybe you can join me here if you want to save yourself. Come on over!" The idea appealed to the elephant; without losing a second, he jumped into the pit. As soon as the elephant was inside the hole, Kevin scrambled up his back and hopped out. Thus, the clever boy applied his presence of mind to free himself, while the foolish elephant lay inside fearing that the sky was about to fall down.

277 Kevin steals Cucumbers

One day, Kevin was feeling very hungry. The boy came upon a sprawling field filled with juicy green cucumbers. He sneaked in and managed to steal some cucumbers. A scarecrow stood guard in the centre of the field. Seeing the funny figure, Kevin began to mock, "Your so called master has given you the duty to scare off intruders. Then why don't you scare me off, huh? C'mon, scare me off. Do your duty and scare me off." He kicked the scarecrow hard, but unfortunately his leg got stuck to the glue the farmer had applied on the scarecrow to catch pesky animals. All efforts to free himself failed. When the farmer saw the trapped boy, he was very happy. He caught Kevin and threw him into a cage. At night, the farmer's dog saw Kevin inside the cage. He laughed at him sarcastically saying that the farmer was going to feast on him the next day. And that tonight was his last night. But clever Kevin contradicted

him, "You are wrong. I'm not going to be cooked tomorrow. In fact, I'm going to be a prince because the farmer will marry his daughter off to me tomorrow. He has put me in this cage so that I don't run away; otherwise, he will lose the best match for his girl. After marriage, I will inherit his property – including you! And then, you will have to wag your tail for me also. I feel sorry for you! You will but remain a pet." The dog was infuriated on hearing this. "After years of loyal service to my master, this is what I am going to receive? He will tomorrow make a prince of this boy who attacked his field, and I—I will still be a tyke! No! I won't let it happen." The dog requested Kevin to switch places. Kevin answered, "I too don't want that you should get nothing for your years of loyalty. Therefore, you take my place." So the dog switched places with Kevin and thus set him free. In the morning, the farmer was taken aback to see his own dog inside the cage wagging his tail – with Kevin being nowhere around.

278 Kevin & the Crocodiles

One day, Kevin had to cross a river. But the vicious crocodiles with sharp teeth and claws were muddling up near the riverbank. The boy hit upon a brilliant idea to fool the creepy crocodiles. He called out to them and said, "Wow! You all are pretty strong. Even humans are afraid of you." "Of course, Boy," answered the crocodiles. "Men stand no chance before us. And if you dare come closer, you too will get to know how stronger we are." Sensing that the foolish crocodiles were enjoying themselves, Kevin asked them to stand in a row. "And why should we do that?" questioned one of the crocodiles. Kevin explained, "I just want to examine how strong you guys are, as you say. I know I have no other option but to be chewed up by you all. Therefore, it is my final wish to be devoured by the strongest crocodile amongst you. Once you make a queue, I will one-by-one step over each one of you. Anyone who will be pressed down with the weight of my feet is a weak crocodile. But the one who will remain firm is the strongest of you all. Now kindly make a queue because I just don't want to be eaten by a weak crocodile." Furious with his insulting words, the crocodiles agreed to stand in a row, touching the other end of the river. Kevin put his light feet onto the back of the crocodiles counting One, Two, Three... When he reached the last crocodile, he briskly jumped off to the riverbank and ran away to a safer place. It took long for the crocodiles to realize that they were boasting of overcoming men, and how could a tiny boy befool the mighty giants?

279 Kevin & the Tiger

Kevin was out on a picnic with his friends. While at play, Kevin felt thirsty. But the little boys had forgotten to bring water along with the food. Kevin said to his friends, "You guys wait here. There must be some nice river here around. I go and look for it and will be back in a minute." So, he went off searching for a river. And he found one nearby, which flowed into a forest. As he bent down to drink water, a tiger, lurking in the bushes waiting for his prey, pounced in front of Kevin. He started running as fast as he could, but the tiger was faster than him. While running, Kevin raced his clever brain: "How much will I run? I anyhow have to save my neck from this tiger. I must do something to stop him." Kevin blurted out to the tiger as he was still running, "I know you are mighty, tough, and all, but my king has greater strength than you! No one can match his powers!" Listening to this, the tiger put a halt to his chase. Seeing him stop, Kevin also stopped. The tiger was filled with fury. He asked Kevin, "Arrr! Who are you talking about? There can be no king hereof except for me. You say your king is stronger than me? Take me to him, and I will show you who is stronger. Arrrhhh!" Kevin escorted the tiger to the same river and exclaimed, "Look into the water, and you will see my king." The tiger stooped low and saw his own reflection in the water. He took the image for the rival king and growled angrily at it. The image obviously growled as he growled, but the tiger thought that the rival king was growling back at him. He said, "You impertinent tiger! You defy me to fight? Here I come. Save yourself." The enraged tiger jumped into the river to teach his imaginary enemy a lesson. In the meantime, Kevin got his golden chance to flee from there. He darted away with great velocity. Here, the tiger struggled inside the river. Once out of water, the tiger all drenched and exhausted vowed to take revenge on the boy. When Kevin reached back to his friends, they all asked him, "Where have you been? We were almost dead waiting for you." Kevin replied, "Sorry to make you wait, guys. I thought why only drink, let's bathe also in the river." And the boys wrapped up their picnic to go back home.

280 The Bundle of Sticks

A father had seven sons, who did not have a big age difference between them. The father was fed up with the perpetual quarrelling among his sons. Every time they fell out over some

matter, the father tried his best to heal their post-dispute soreness. But when he saw his teachings falling flat on them, he resolved something. The determined father called all his seven sons out. He gave one stick to each and asked them to break it. All his sons could do it very easily. One of them asked the father, "Father, you called us all out to do this! What is so important about it?" "Keep quiet, son. I am not yet done." The father then took a bundle of seven sticks and placed it into the hands of his first son and ordered him to break it. The son tried hard but could not break the bundle. The father then passed the bundle on to his second son who was the strongest of all. He put in all his strength. "Even I can't break it, Father," and gave up the second son also. The remaining five sons also tried but they too could not break the bundle. The father explained to them- "The seven single sticks which I gave you earlier were the seven of you. Because of discord, you could be broken in the first attempt only. But none of you could break the bundle of seven sticks. Similarly, any evil or peril will not be able to break you down, if you live tied together just like this bundle of seven sticks." The sons understood where their father was pointing to. The brothers reconciled with one another; and from then on, they always stood up together—shoulder-to-shoulder—against every adversity of the world.

281 The drowned Woman & her Husband

A husband and wife were walking by a fast-flowing stream. Suddenly, the wife who was close to the edge, slipped and fell into the water! The strong current carried her away, and the frightened woman screamed for her husband to save her. In few moments, she was out of sight! The panic-stricken husband ran in the opposite direction of the current to look for his wife. A man was coming from the other side. When he saw the husband desperately looking for something but running against the current, he was confused and shocked. He went near, stopped him and asked, "What is the problem? You look disturbed." "Please do something. My wife has fallen into the stream, and I fear that she has drowned." The man said, "Then why are you running against the current? This is stupidity! She must have gone with the flow, so you should run in the direction of the flow." The husband said, "If I do as you say, I am certainly never going to find her." The man didn't understand him. The husband explained to him, "While my wife was alive, she always went against the right ways of the world because she was a contradicting and difficult woman. The one who never went along with the tide of the world, you say that she has gone along with the tide of this stream? That's why I am searching her against the current." The man was left open-mouthed by the words of the husband.

282 Mullah uses his Head

One day, it so happened that Mullah Naseeruddin displeasured Emperor Akbar. And the emperor asked one of his men to slay him and bring his head. Mullah was very upset with this. He went to Birbal and sought his advice. Birbal said, "It is a difficult situation, but let me try. Rest is your destiny." And he told him what to do. Mullah persuaded Akbar's man to take him alive to the court. Akbar was very furious on seeing Mullah alive. He asked the soldier, "Didn't I order you to bring Mullah's head to the court and not Mullah himself?" Mullah said politely, "It is not his fault, Huzoor. I asked him to do so. You know whenever you want something done, I don't trust anybody else lest it is badly done. So I thought let me do it myself. So I decided to bring my head myself on my own shoulders. My head is here, Huzoor." And he bowed his head before Akbar. The manner in which Mullah defended himself pleased Akbar so much that he allowed Mullah to keep his head on his shoulders.

283 The Donkey's Relatives

One day, Mullah loaded some vegetables on his donkey and set off for the market. After a little distance, the donkey stopped moving and stayed where it was. Now Mullah was in a hurry. He tried coaxing the donkey to move but when it refused to walk, he started beating it up. Seeing this, people gathered around them. A man asked Mullah, "Why are you beating this poor creature?" Another man said, "You are a merciless man who is beating a speechless animal." The third man said, "Don't beat it, it will move on its own." Mullah was angry and he said to the donkey, "If I knew that you had so many relatives around, I would never have beaten you. I can see that you have a large family here." Hearing this, the people went their way leaving Mullah alone with his donkey.

284 Milk for Mullah

Mullah Naseeruddin was going somewhere. He met a man carrying a milk can. The man said to Mullah, "Mullahji, I have a problem, and I need your advice." "Why not! What is that problem?" asked Mullah, eyeing the milk can. The man said, "Whenever I get up in the morning, I feel intoxicated. I don't know what to do, and I don't understand what the problem may be." Mullah asked him, "What do you take in the last before you sleep?" The man

said, "Normally, I drink milk." Mullah said, "Now I understand your problem." "What is that?" asked the man. Mullah said, "It is milk that causes the intoxication." "How?" asked the man in innocence. Mullah explained to him, "You drink milk before sleeping. In sleep, you toss around. So the milk gets churned; it turns into butter and then the butter gets churned; it turns into fat and then the fat gets churned; it turns into sugar and then the sugar gets churned; and it finally turns into alcohol. So when you wake up in the morning, you wake up with alcohol in your stomach, and that is why you feel intoxicated." "So what should I do?" asked the man in simplicity. Mullah said, "It is so simple. Don't drink the milk. Here, give it to me." Mullah literally snatched the milk can from the man and went on his way. The poor man stood there bewildered.

285 Sudama

Sudama was the son of a very poor priest. He was a quiet, happy boy. When he became ten years old, his father sent him to the ashram of Sandipani to study the scriptures and learn other duties. It was the custom in those days to send young boys—rich and poor—to stay and study in the home of the teacher and also learn to serve him. Students had to sweep the teacher's house and go to the forest to bring firewood, and to its premises to fetch water from its streams. It was a hard life, but students were taught to obey their teacher. Sandipani was one of the best teachers. The sons of the rich and poor came here in large numbers. Sandipani and Sudama's father were friends. Sandipani had insisted that the bright boy must come to his ashram. Two other boys also came. They were Krishna and Balram. Within a few days, Krishna and Sudama became good friends and did everything together. One day, Sandipani's wife asked them to get firewood from the forest. The boys happily set off with two axes. Just when they were ready to leave with their piles of wood there came rain, heavy and fast. The ground became flooded. The boys took shelter under a tree, fully wet. It soon became dark. Krishna and Sudama sat down close to one another to keep warm. After some time, Sudama said, "Krishna, we've spent wonderful days here, but they will soon be over. You will go away and one day become king. I will return to my village and continue to live as a poor man. Krishna, when we are older, will you remember me, your poor friend? Will the king remember?" Krishna was shocked. He said, "Sudama, we are friends and we'll always remain friends. What has age got to do with it?" Sudama smiled sadly in the dark. He knew he would always remember Krishna. But how could Krishna remember him after he became a king? But he kept quiet as tears fell from his eyes. As the night wore on, the boys fell asleep. They awoke at dawn. They found that they had fallen asleep on each other's shoulders. Wet and stiff, they stood up and looked around. The ground was still wet, but it had

stopped raining. Suddenly they heard Sandipani calling their names in a very agitated voice. The boys picked up the wood and hastened towards him. He was so relieved to see them. "My boys, you risked your lives to do your work! My blessings will be with you always."

286 Krishna parts from Sudama

Few days later, Krishna and Sudama went again to the forest to chop wood. After they had finished it, Krishna felt tired and sleepy. Sudama said, "Krishna, put your head on my lap and rest." Krishna promptly put his head on Sudama's lap and fell asleep, but not for long. After a while, he sat up and asked, "Sudama, what are you carrying around your waist? It's rubbing against my face." Sudama quickly covered the place with his hands and said, "It's nothing." Krishna refused to accept that. He pulled Sudama's hand away and took out the cloth bag he found under his clothes. He opened the bag carefully and peeped in. "Puffed rice!" he cried. "You carried puffed rice for me, didn't you? Now don't lie." Sudama nodded his head. "I know you like puffed rice, so I put away a little from my share for you." "Then why didn't you—" "I thought you'd laugh." "Why should I? I love it! Thank you" When they returned to the ashram, Sandipani was waiting for them. "Krishna, some men have come from Mathura. They say that you must leave with them. It is an urgency. So Krishna took leave of his teacher, bade a fond farewell to Sudama and left the ashram with the men. Sudama was heartbroken. He realised that his life in the ashram with Krishna was over, forever. Many years passed. Sudama had returned to his village and became a teacher. He was still poor, very poor, but he remained happy with what he had, however little that was.

287 Compulsion of Poverty

Sudama married. His wife was very patient and good. Though they lived in poverty, she never complained. As time went by, they had two children. It was then that their poverty became too much for his wife to bear. She could not bear to see her children cry themselves to sleep on empty stomachs. One day, she decided to speak to her husband. She said to him, "Dear husband, you have often spoken fondly of your friendship with Krishna. You told me that he had promised to remain your friend forever. Now he is the king of Dwarka. People say that he is kind and generous and gives freely to those who go to him. Your children cry from hunger every day. Why don't you go to him? Sudama was shocked. "How can you say such a thing! You want me to beg Krishna?" She said, "Don't ask for anything. Just pay

him a visit. That is all I ask." "What if he after all these years has forgotten me? What if he does not recognise me?" One does not forget friends. Please go. You will be happy and so will Krishna." After listening to his wife, Sudama finally agreed. "But what do I take for him? I cannot go empty-handed!" "Wait!" said his wife. She went into the kitchen and brought some puffed rice and gave it to Sudama. "You had told me once that he loved puffed rice."

288 Sudama goes to meet King of Dwarka

Sudama set out on foot for Dwarka. It was a long journey, and it took him more than a month to reach. Finally, weary and sore-footed, Sudama reached Dwarka. He looked at the grand city. He could see the palace gleaming in the setting sun. He began to walk towards the palace. When he came to the palace gate, the guard looked him up and down. He wondered what this ragged man wanted at this hour. He tried to send him away saying, "This is not the hour when My Lord meets people. Go away." Hearing this, Sudama nearly turned away. Then he remembered that he had walked all this distance to meet Krishna. So he walked up to the guard and said, "Please tell Krishna that Sudama has come." "That's all?" asked the guard, surprised. "That's all." "Wait here. I'll send your message." Sudama sat down on the low wall near the gate and stretched his aching legs. He was faint with hunger and his feet were soiled and swollen with the skin cracked in many places. He waited; and in his weak state, he fell asleep.

289 True Friendship

Krishna was talking to his wife Rukmini, when the guard entered, bowed and said, "My Lord, a man whose feet are caked with mud and whose clothes are all tattered is at the palace gate. He refuses to go. "Who is he?" asked Krishna. "My Lord, he says, 'Tell Krishna that Sudama has come." "What name did you say?" "Sudama, My Lord." "Sudama!" exclaimed Krishna, getting up excitedly. Krishna did not wait to hear any more. Barefoot, he ran through the palace halls calling out, "Sudama! Sudama!" He found Sudama, faint with hunger and tiredness, near the palace gate. Sudama opened his eyes when he recognised Krishna's voice, calling out his name. He tried to get up quickly but fell. Krishna was quick to catch him before he fell to the ground. He looked at his boyhood friend. Their eyes met and they clasped one another and wept tears of joy. The guards were looking at in surprise. Krishna picked up Sudama and carried him into the palace. The guards rushed to help, but Krishna waved them away.

290 Krishna washes Sudama's Feet

Krishna carried Sudama to his room where Rukmini was waiting for them. She had heard Krishna speak about Sudama and so often that she was longing to meet this friend of her husband, whom he loved so much, even after so many years. Krishna helped Sudama sit down on the bed. Krishna went out and soon returned with a pail of water, a basin and a towel. He set the pail and basin in front of Sudama. Then he carefully placed his friend's feet in the basin, poured water over them and gently washed them. The shocked Sudama tried to stop Krishna, but he authoritatively asked him to sit quietly. Sudama watched him with tears in his eyes. Rukmini stood nearby, fanning him. Having washed his feet and wiped them up, Krishna helped Sudama to lie down. Then he rubbed his body with sandalwood oil to cool his soreness. After this, he fed him light, healthy food. Then he sat at the foot of the bed and watched Sudama fall asleep. Sudama was so tired and had eaten after so many days, that he slept deeply and for many hours. Rukmini continued to fan him as Krishna sat quietly with a happy smile. Finally, Sudama awoke and sat up with a start. For a moment, he did not know where he was. "I couldn't help you change your clothes because you were too tired. Now that you have rested, please go to the room and change into this set of clothes. Please don't say no." Krishna led Sudama to a large room. Krishna went out shut the door and waited. And while he waited, he thought. Sudama, he could see, had remained as poor as he had always been. But he also knew that Sudama would never ask him for help. But surely Sudama would be married now with a wife and children. What about them? Krishna's heart filled with sadness to think of the little ones living in poverty. He was sure that Sudama had come because his wife had begged him.

291 The Puffed Rice

Sudama remembered the gift he had brought for Krishna. He now felt ashamed to give it to him. What a gift to give to a king! He hid it under his clothes. Sudama, washed and freshly-clothed, came out of the large room. He felt like a man in a dream. Everything seemed unreal to him: Krishna, the king of Dwarka, had washed his feet with such care so as not to hurt the cracked skin of his feet, had fed him, and had sat at the foot of his bed as he slept. His wife, the queen, had fanned him. He felt blessed. Krishna again made him sit on his bed and said, "Tell me, my friend, are you married?" "Yes, I am and have two small children." "I hope they have as happy a childhood as we had. Do you remember our stay in the ashram? "Of course I do! I also

remember how beautifully you played the flute. Do you still play it?" "No, dear friend. Those days are gone. That reminds me. Remember you had once kept some puffed rice for me from your portion? I still love puffed rice. By the way, have you brought a gift for me?" "It's not proper to ask such questions," Rukmini was quick to say. "Not proper to ask a friend! Then you don't understand what friendship really means." Sudama listened quietly. He felt ashamed to give Krishna what he had brought. He simply hung his head down. But Krishna understood. He asked, "Sudama, you are hiding something under your clothes! What is it?" Before Sudama could answer, Krishna pulled out the rag bag and exclaimed, "Rukmini, see what friendship means! Even after all these years, Sudama remembered! that I love puffed rice!" Krishna ate the puffed rice as though it was something very delicious. He gave some to Rukmini also.

292 Sudama returns to his Village

Krishna asked Sudama, "Why didn't you come earlier to meet me? What kept you so busy?" "I was not busy, Krishna, but I knew that you were. I just didn't want to trouble you." The two friends talked for many hours. It was close to midnight when Krishna said, "Sudama, go to bed now. We shall make good use of your stay here." "But I must leave tomorrow!" exclaimed Sudama. "I can't stay away for long. I have to return to my family." "You have stayed with your family all these years. Surely you can spend a few days with a friend. By the way, what is the name of your village?" Sudama gave the name of his village, hoping that Krishna would ask something more about his family, and then he could tell him about their poverty. But Krishna did not ask, so Sudama did not say anything either. That very night, Krishna called his ministers and arranged for a large group of the best craftsmen, builders, and other workers to leave immediately for Sudama's village. He gave detailed instructions about what he wanted them to do. Next few weeks passed quickly. Sudama was so happy that he did not realise how fast the days were passing. He often thought of his family and wondered whether there was any food for them. He remembered his wife telling him to seek Krishna's help. "But that," said Sudama to himself, "was out of the question." Whenever Sudama spoke about returning, Krishna begged him to stay on. And Sudama always agreed. Finally, one day, Krishna said, "Sudama, I think you have stayed away from your family longer than you wanted. They must be missing you now. I shall arrange for a chariot to drive you to your village tomorrow." "A chariot!" exclaimed Sudama. "I'll walk, Krishna. I walked to Dwarka, didn't I?" "Of course you did, but you walked here from your village. Now you are returning to your village from my palace. So you'll travel the way I decide. Isn't that fair?"

"All right," agreed Sudama. The next morning, Sudama took leave of Rukmini and climbed on to the chariot driven by four white horses. Krishna also climbed in saying, "I'll go with you till the borders of Dwarka. They travelled thus, side by side. When they reached the borders of Dwarka, Krishna told the charioteer to stop. Then, bidding a fond farewell to his friend, he got down and climbed on to his own chariot, that had been following them. Sudama's chariot went on.

293 From Hut to Palace

Sudama was content. He had spent happy weeks with his close friend who, inspite of his duties, had always made sure that he found time to chat with him. Now that Sudama was nearing home, he began to think of his family. He was sad that he was returning empty-handed. The chariot stopped. The charioteer got down and bowed to him. He said, "Sir, we have reached your village." Sudama hurriedly got down and walked eagerly towards his house. Suddenly he stopped. Where had his house gone? Where were his wife and children? For a moment, his heart filled with fear. He feared the worst. Had they died of starvation? He looked around and found the surrounding area with high buildings, shining and new. There were gardens and pools with lilies and lotuses. Well-dressed men and women were walking about. Sudama stood still, totally puzzled. "Whose place is this?" wondered he. "It looks as if some magic has changed the place." In the meantime, his wife had received news of his return. She hurriedly came out of the palace with their children. They were dressed in beautiful clothes, with gold necklaces around their necks. Sudama was shocked. His wife took his hand and led him inside the palace. He entered it in a daze. His wife said, "This is now our home. Isn't it wonderful?" Looking around in wonder, Sudama exclaimed, "This is Krishna's work! I did not mention our poverty nor did he ask, but he knew! He so joyfully accepted the bag of puffed rice and in exchange, he has given us all this! His love and generosity has no limit. I know I will never get a chance to thank him, but I am sure Krishna knows the love and gratitude I feel for him. May the tale of our friendship live forever."

294 The Cabbages

Maya had a kitchen garden where she had grown number of vegetables. She loved spending her time there. Her daughter, Binty, also helped her to water the plants. One day, Maya called Binty and holding a cabbage in her hand pointed the yellow spots on it. She

told Binty that the spots were tiny eggs of worms which slowly destroy the vegetable. "So this afternoon, will you check every cabbage and remove all the eggs you find?" "Yes, Mama!" However, Binty got busy with her pet dog and forgot her promise. Unfortunately, Maya fell ill and could not work in the garden for some days. Once recovered, she went to the garden to see if Binty did her job well. But to her horror, every single cabbage leaf had been eaten up by worms. Binty hung her head in shame and started crying. Maya consoled her- "Never mind, now! It's all over. But remember, what can be done today, should never be put off till the next day."

295 The Charger & the Miller

When the charger grew old, he was sent to work in a mill instead of a battlefield. There, the charger became very unhappy with his work and began cursing his fate. Then the wise miller having affinity with the charger said, "Do not cry friend! Have faith in yourself. You must understand the fact that our body has to surrender with the wheel of time. For life is full of ups and downs." The charger realised the truth in the miller's statement and kept quiet in resilience.

296 The four Elements

On his fourteenth birthday, Rick decided to take up a job. He thought that spending all the time in studies didn't behove a boy of 14. After a long thinking, he said, "I will become a gardener. It would be lovely living in greenery and flowers." So he became a gardener, but shortly gave it up saying that he was tired of getting dirty with the manure all the time. Then he decided to become a hunter. "Life would be adventurous in the shady woods. I will befriend many animals." But again, like before, he left hunting saying that he suffered morning sickness in the early morning air. Next it was fisherman job he took up. "Nothing could be better than sailing clear waters. How refreshing, already!" This time, Rick had the excuse of always remaining wet and never dry for leaving this job. Finally, he settled upon becoming a cook. "Every man works to buy tasty food." The pricking heat of the burners soon made Rick give up cooking also. One day, his father asked him the reason behind his dejected state. Rick told everything to his father. The father explained, "If you want to avoid the troubles that earth, air, water and fire give you, then you will have to leave the world forever because these four elements only constitute the world. You can't achieve anything without pain, son. You must learn to face every difficulty with courage if you really want to be happy in your life."

297 The Apple Tree

One afternoon, Pinkie, Shobha and Viju coaxed their Grandfather to narrate the tale behind the huge apple tree that stood in the middle of their courtyard. Their Grandfather, old Rupesh, happily began sharing his experience with the children. It happened thus- that once young Rupesh was blaming his fate at his poor financial condition to his rich neighbour, sitting exactly at the place where the tree stood. The elderly neighbour was gentle and said, "Well! All you need is to begin well! Just below you buried in the ground, lie much more than mere riches. It's up to you to dig it out." That night, he took a spade and began digging the earth in the courtyard. After several hours, Rupesh was left only with a gapping hole staring at him. The next morning, the wise elderly man gifted him a sapling with the valuable message that it will yield fruits which is beyond the happiness of possessing any material wealth. Rupesh planted the sapling in the very ground with care. After several years it grew to a healthy and beautiful tree, bearing the choicest apples in the entire neighbourhood.

298 Pumpkin & Acorn

A man was soothing himself in the shade of an oak tree when he saw a pumpkin vine crept up and coiled about his neighbour's lattice. The plump pumpkins looked so admirable to him. He thought- "How funny! This fragile, gangling plant bears such a big, beautiful fruit. And look at this huge oak. Its acorns are so small and plain. Were I the creator, I would make the oak bear huge, golden pumpkins – each weighing a ton. What a sight that would be!" Suddenly, an acorn fell off the oak's branch and hit at the man's nose with great force. The nose began to bleed. The groaning man said, "Thank God that I was not the creator. Were this acorn a pumpkin, I would be dead by now!"

299 Hercules & Pallas

Hercules was once going by a narrow roadway that suddenly, he came across a strange-looking animal that raised its head at him and howled loudly. But strong Hercules was not daunted at all. He geared up to the monster and gave him a few hard blows with his club and assumed that the monster would now go on his way. But the monster grew three times its previous size,

much to the astonishment of Hercules. Now he appeared even more threatening. So Hercules too redoubled his blows and knocked him down fast and furiously. But the harder and quicker the strokes of the club were, the bigger and more frightful the monster grew and now completely filled up the road. Thereupon, Pallas—the Greek goddess of wisdom, courage, strength and just warfare—appeared on the scene. "Stop, Hercules," said she. "Don't waste your blows. The monster's name is Strife. Let it be on its own, and it will soon become as little as it was first. Remember that Strife feeds on conflict."

300 Fear is the Key

Emperor Akbar was pleased with his emperorship. He concluded to Birbal saying, "Birbal, my people are very obedient to me. They love me very much." Birbal smiled and replied, "This is true, but they fear you too, Huzoor." Akbar refused to believe him and thus asked Birbal to validate his statement. The following day, as per Birbal's instructions, Akbar announced that he was going for hunting, and everybody must pour a pot of milk in a tub kept in the courtyard. In the evening, when Akbar returned from his escapade, to his surprise the tub was filled with water instead of milk. Akbar was highly disappointed but kept silent. Then Birbal advised him to announce that the emperor himself would bear out whether there was milk in the tub or not. The advice was followed. This time when Akbar was back from his outing, the tub was overflowing with milk. Birbal said, "I told you. It is fear which makes people obey you. The first time there was no one to check the tub, so people poured water; but the second time, they knew that you would check yourself, therefore they poured milk."

301 The Wind & the Sun

The wind and the sun argued about which of them was stronger. They decided that whichever of them made a traveller take off his coat first would be considered the stronger one. The wind began the contest. It blew and it blew and it blew with great fury. But the more it blew, the more tightly did the traveller clutch his coat. It was then the sun's turn. At first it shone gently, driving away the chill that the wind had created. Then it grew brighter and brighter and warmer and warmer, till it was so hot that the traveller had to remove his coat to be at ease.

302 Miss Brill

The middle-aged Miss Brill was an English teacher; and apart from teaching English during the week, she dedicated its four afternoons to reading the newspaper to an 'old invalid gentleman'. Miss Brill never admitted that she was lonely. Even when she cried, she asked herself 'who is crying?' But the Sunday afternoons were special: at this time, she would regularly go to the Public Gardens and spend time walking, sitting on a particular bench, and watching people in the park. On one such Sunday, she envisaged that each one present in the park was an unmatchable part of a play of which she was the actress. And now, even that old invalid gentleman was no longer bored of her. Suddenly, a young couple came and sat near her. They whispered some sore remarks at her, which she unfortunately could hear. That day, Miss Brill went home deflated—with no heart for the small pleasures anymore, which had made her life bearable.

303 The Father & his two Daughters

A man had two daughters: If one was the joy of his life, the other was its peace. He loved them unconditionally. Being not very rich, the man married his first daughter off to a gardener and the second to a tile-maker. After a time, the man went to know the well-being of his daughters. First he visited his eldest daughter who was married to the gardener. The man asked, "O my daughter! I am just not used to living without you, but seeing you happy will take away all my dejection. Tell me true, my child, if you are happy in your new home." The daughter cheerfully replied, "I was sure that my destiny is golden since I have got a father like you. So how will a girl with golden destiny not have a good husband? I have everything, except for..." The man got curious. "Why did you stop? What is it that you need?" The daughter said, "You know, Father, that he is a gardener. If God pours a heavy fall, his plantation will also prosper like everything else. Please pray with me that it pours soon." "Of course, rest assured." And the father bade Goodbye. Next, he visited his second daughter whom he found was as happy as his other daughter was. He felt extremely content and was thankful to the Almighty that his daughters were well-settled. He inquired her if there was something that she wanted. At this, she replied, "I want nothing, dear father, but have only one wish: that the dry weather remains on. The hot and bright sunshine will dry the bricks made by my husband to be hard and strong. You too pray to God that the sunny weather doesn't go away for now" The sad father said to her, "Your sister wants me to pray for rain, while you want me to pray for dry weather. 'May God never cause a father into such a situation!' That's all I pray." And the man left for his home.

304 Miss Cynthie

Miss Cynthie took a two-day journey to meet her grandson Dave. She was yet ignorant of what Dave's occupation was and was anxious to know about it. Dave arrived to receive his grandma on time. In his expensive house, Miss Cynthie kept asking him what his work was, but everytime he put it off. The next evening, Dave took Miss Cynthie to a theatre but the real shock came when she discovered that her grandson was the star of the show. Miss Cynthie was heart-rent. She had aspired her grandson to become a prestigious figure and not some theatre artist which, in her mind, was synonymous with sin. But when she saw how much the audience admired Dave and when he pointed her out as his aspiration, her pride and love were boundless.

305 The Doll's House

The Burnell daughters had great influence in their school. In fact, Isabel, the oldest of the three, held court at recess. The Kelveys, Lil and Else, were not allowed to be spoken with because they were the children from the lowest of the social classes. When a family friend gifted the Burnell daughters a big, gaudily furnished doll house, they invited school friends home to see it. Of course, the Kelveys were not included, but as Kezia Burnell, the youngest of the three, saw the Kelveys passing by, she invited them in on impulse. When Aunt Beryl discovered the intruders, she drove them out instantly. The frightened and insulted Lil and Else still walked away with a smile that they at least could have a glimpse of the doll's house.

306 Paul's Case

Paul is a difficult boy who had kept his father and his teachers both annoyed with his impertinence and aimless life. He only felt good at being a concert usher or a hanger-on at some theatre. Finally, Paul's father stopped his schooling and put him out to work. But he had no idea that this way he gave his spoilt son an entry to the world he wanted. Paul stole a sum of 2000 $ from his company and fled to New York City overnight. He had a glorious few days before he was tracked down. Thinking it the only possible way-out for him—he committed suicide.

307 The Goods & the Ills

One historical day, all Ills of the universe dispossessed all the Goods of the common share they each had in the affairs of mankind, from the very beginning. The Ills had prevailed over the Goods in number. And because majority wins, the Ills also thought that they didn't need to share the deeds of men with the Goods any longer; now they could rule without them. Feeling cheated, the Goods wafted up to the heaven and asked for a righteous vengeance upon their persecutors. They entreated Jupiter- "Kindly put a stop to the association between us and those deceivers. We can't get along any longer for we have nothing in common.

Where we try to end a war, they keep adding fuel to the fire. They never listen to us. And now being more in number than us, they will all the more be rebellious. O Jove! You must enact a permanent, unbreakable law for our future protection so that we may work separately without any fear." Jupiter granted their request and decreed with a thunder- "Henceforth, the Ills shall visit Earth always in each other's company and never singly. But the Goods shall enter the habitations of men one-by-one." That meant that the Ills—which are now abound—will not come to men one-by-one but together in one time. While the Goods—which are not alike to each other, but each is virtuous in its own different way—will come separately and only to those who are able to discern them.

308 The three lovely Flowers

It was a bright morning. Walsh and his two sisters were strolling in their garden. Walsh stood by roses and said, "For me, rose is the most beautiful flower in the universe." Wrenna said, "What about this lily-bed? You have to agree that they are equally beautiful." "How can you two ignore these cute violets that brought great joy to our hearts last spring? With their colour, they give a regal touch to our garden," said Wushy. Now, their mother was hearing them all from the garden bench. "The three flowers you three defend so much symbolise the three precious virtues of life." "What are they?" Walsh, Wrenna and Wushy went near their mother. She continued, "The violets symbolise 'modesty', the lilies 'innocence', and the flaming colour of the roses show how much you can let your hearts burn in the love and service of God and mankind. So Modesty, Innocence and Charity are the greatest virtues of your youth."

309 The Fir & the Bramble

In a thicket, there was a Fir Tree and a Bramble. One day, the Fir Tree and the Bramble fell out. The Fir Tree boasted, "How dare you talk to me like that. What do you think of yourself? Who are you? A mere bush which is so rough-looking! Humans don't come near you, and why would they? Who would want to wound their hands by touching your thorny stems? You are comparing yourself to me! Open your eyes and look at me. I am so tall, beautiful, and nicely-shaped. You are not even half of my length. Humans trample you out of ignorance, while they look up to me. Do you know I am so useful? With my wood, humans build their houses and ships. My firs are means of decoration. And you—you are good for nothing, nothing at all. I kiss the sky, while you lick the dust. You'd better be in your limits before me."All the while, the Bramble kept listening to the Fir Tree quietly and then answered: "You might be greater than me in many ways, but I still pity you." The Fir Tree got even more angry. "Why do you pity at me?" The bramble said, "Every time these humans want to utilize your assets, they hack you down. I consider myself lucky because I don't have to live through those wounds. I know—whether you accept or not—that whenever you faced the saws and axes, you must have wished you too were a Bramble." The Bramble then turned his face away, ending the quarrel; and the Fir Tree kept looking at him in silence with teary eyes.

310 The Miser & his Gold

Pablo was an extremely miser person. In order so that he never had to spend more money than he required, he didn't get married. Everyone in his neighbourhood was aware of his miserliness. Although Pablo could buy all the comforts of life, yet he could not sleep at nights. Why because he was all the time troubled lest someday his wealth should be stolen. To save himself from ever seeing such a day, Pablo resolved to convert his entire wealth into gold and bury it in a place which no one ever visited. So, he went to a desolate area in the back of his neighbourhood at night and buried his gold by a guava tree. Everyday Pablo would go there, dig the gold up, and gloat over it. There, a thief was keeping his eye on Pablo as

to why he went daily in that wild. When the thief finally found out about the secret of the buried gold, he waited no time to avail of the opportunity and stole the gold. Next day, when Pablo came to see his gold, he gasped as he was seeing that his gold was dug out and stolen. First few moments, he was choked to utter anything, then he made such a loud cry that his neighbours gathered around him. They asked him the reason of his crying. He said that he had hid his gold here which was now stolen. The neighbours asked him if he ever took some of it out to use. Pablo answered in negative. The neighbours then said, "You can still keep coming back here because when there was gold here, you only looked at it and went away. Now there is an empty hole. So what? Come and look at it also and go away." What the neighbours meant that gold was not meant to be buried but to be used for the good of the possessor and the needy. What is the need of earning when one is not using it up to live a fulfilling life?

311 Hercules & the Wagoner

A wagoner was driving his heavily loaded wagon along a country lane which was marshy. And suddenly it happened that, the wheels of the wagon got into a rut and began to sink gradually. The rustic driver went stupefied with the fear of death and looked about his wagon aghast to find a way to get away. But still sitting and watching the wagon drowning, the wagoner started to utter loud cries to Hercules to come and help him. Hercules appeared before him and addressed him thus- "You loser! Put your shoulders to the wheels, goad on your bullocks, and never pray for help until you have done your best to help yourself; because if you will henceforth depend upon it, you will pray in vain. 'Self-help is the best help.'"

312 The Fisherman & the little Fish

A fisherman caught fishes in the evening and sold them next day in the market. This only was his source of income. One such evening, the fisherman was sitting at a river bank with the hook of his fishing rod suspended in the water and waiting curiously for a nice fish to be stuck. After few minutes, the Fisherman felt that something on the hook as the fishing rod shook. He rewound the spool rapidly to lift up the hook. When the hook was out of water, the Fisherman saw that he had caught a fry – a young, very small fish. The Fry panting of life pleaded before the

fisherman for its life. It said, "Oh you who catches me! Look at me and my size. I am so small for your business. I am no good neither for your appetite nor for you job. If you cook me, will you be satiated? Or, if you sell me, will you be rich? No. So, I pray to you to release me to go back where my home is. I promise you when I will be fully grown up and a big fish, I myself will come up to you, and then you catch me and enjoy a handsome profit." The fisherman smiled and said, "Little fish, you are too smart for your size. You think I will let my present gain go for an uncertain profit? I am not so foolish. I understand that drops make a sea." And the fisherman went back with his catch of the day.

313 At the Beach

It was the very first day of Questa and Romney's summer vacation. They had planned only fun in their two-month school-free time period. Their dad suggested beach-picnic on the day, and Questa and Romney were of course all thrilled. So Dad, Mum, Questa and Romney did all the packing, hopped into the car, and finally reached the beach. O what a beautiful piece of scenery: The sea water glistened against the sky made golden by Sun! Terrific contrast!! Questa and Romney rushed to the sea gladly, followed by their parents. "Where shall we sit?" asked Mum. "Here! The sand is just right here to make sandcastles," said Questa. Mum unrolled the mat and spread all the carried items over it. Dad drove a beach umbrella into the sand. They both put on their sunglasses and sprawled basking the glory of Sun. There, Questa and Romney were walking along the shore. Admiring, they saw a lighthouse and wondered what it was. "It is a tower which emits big, bright lights to safely guide ships from the rocks to the shore," said a man holding the reins of his pony. "Wow! I have never ridden a pony. Mum, can we have a pony ride?" Romney shouted out loud. "Okay, but be careful," said she. The man helped the kids to mount the pony and took them further on the shore. A bit away, Questa spotted some seashells lying. "Seashells!! I want them." The man helped her to alight from the pony. She gathered as many as she could and ran to show them to Mum. Romney followed on the pony. Dad paid the pony man for the ride. He, Mum, Questa and Romney ate their picnic viands. "Evening is falling. We must leave," suggested Mum. "Sure. But only on the promise that we will come here again. It was great being on the beach!" said Romney. "Sure, son," said Dad. And they all left.

314 The Fowler & the Snake

There was a fowler in Greece whose name was Shawn. He was employed by the King of Greece and was in the good books of his. Shawn would catch beautiful, unique birds for the King; and he in return would pay Shawn greatly the King decorated his gardens with the exotic birds caught by Shawn: He put them in gold cages and hung them in his many gardens. But if the caught birds were local and ordinary, they made the dinner of the King and his family. One afternoon, the King sent for Shawn in his court. Shawn appeared before the King on time. The King said to him, "Dear Shawn, I have heard that the sky of my kingdom is filled with magpies. My daughter is very attracted to the black and white colour of this bird. Magpies are her favourite. So I want you to go and bring a good number of magpies for my lovely daughter." "As you like, Sire." And Shawn turned back to fulfil the wish of his King. Shawn was setting his bird-catching net. To himself, he kept saying, "This day is very lucky for me. I am sure once I hand over the magpies to King, he will fill me with gold. Let me make an unbeatable snare. No one can save these magpies from my skilful hands today." In his conversation with himself and fixing the net, Shawn was so occupied that he never realized when he stepped upon a snake resting nearby. And the snake out of fury bit him. Shawn instantly fell down shaking with pain and poison. Some men from around ran to Shawn and took him up to a medic. A man who decided to stay back and watch all said, "A man who will make snares for others will eventually find only himself trapped in it."

315 The Man with two Mistresses

In a metropolitan city of London, a man lived with his two mistresses. He was attached to both and always fulfilled their wish. Of the two mistresses, one was old and the other was young. The old mistress always envied the young one thinking that her youth would one day snatch her love and financier from her, whereas the young mistress never liked the old one because she knew that she was not liked by her either. The man was in his middle age. His head bore hair which was like salt and pepper. The old mistress could not tolerate that her lover looked younger than herself. So whenever he came to her, she would pluck the black hair out of his head. She would do so to make her man match her own

age. On the other hand, the young mistress hated to see her beloved look so older. So she also plucked the hair out of the man's head—but, white hair—whenever he went to her. She thought that by doing this, she could make him look young –at least young enough for herself. This series of action on the part of both the mistresses caused the man all his hair, and he was left bald. As he stood in front of the mirror, sad and missing his lost hair, he said to himself, "I wish I'd better had two servants than two women."

316 The Mountain in Labour

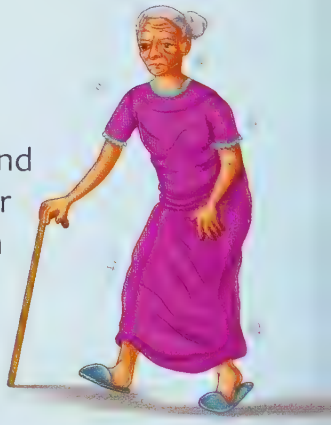
Once, the people of a country were informed with a very astonishing news. The news was that a big-big mountain of their land was in labour pains—which meant that it was expecting! Some disbelieved it, while some took it for a miracle by God to indicate the people of this country are very futuristically important. The countrymen thronged the mountain. They were standing jaw-dropped as the mountain was actually making the sounds of pain a mother-to-be would. With the groaning of the mountain, its apex huffed out smoke, the ground quaked, and the rocks tumbled down. All the people moved close to one another to view this terrible fact. They could not believe their eyes that a mountain, a mass of rock, was in labour for real. They waited and waited and waited but nothing was delivered as yet. After some time, the mountain let out its final ear-splitting groan. As a result, the earth around began to shake violently. The fissures ran through between the feet of the countrymen. They thought next moment they would be entombed in the earth. They fell on their knees and started begging to God. All of a sudden, the shaking earth came to a still and all hue & cry turned into silence. The countrymen opened their eyes slowly and saw that a teeny-weeny mouse was pushed out by the mountain. And it stood afraid in the centre surrounded by the huge humans. The countrymen were angrier at themselves than at the mountain that they wasted their time just to see a little mouse. They stomped back to their respective homes saying: "Dug a mountain and achieved a mouse."

317 The Farmer & his two Sons

There was once a farmer who owned four farms. He was greatly attached to his farms because it was them which sustained him economically all his life. Now he was old and at the point of death. He had two sons for a family. Lying on his bed, he thought to himself- "I

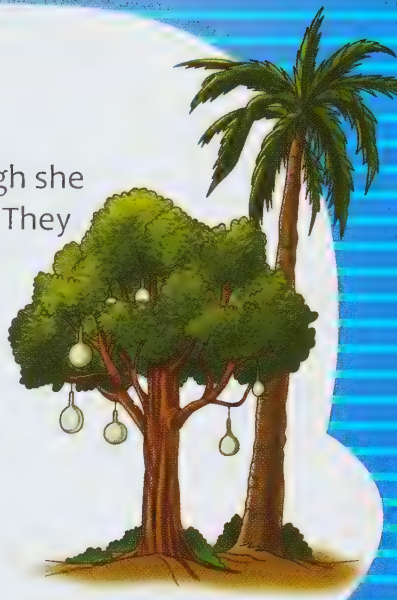
have reared my farms like my own children. After me, they would be my sons'. I have to make sure that they give the same attention to these farms as I myself have given to them." So, the farmer called his two sons in. "Sit near me, my children." And the two boys sat on either side of the bed. The farmer continued, "My sons you are, as responsible as I have been. I have loved both of you equally. But now the time is near when I must part from you." Hearing his father's words, the boys—with tears in their eyes—said at once, "Please don't say so, Father. If God wishes, you will live even longer than us." The farmer smiled and said, "Listen, I distribute two of my four farms to each of you. You must take care of them with best vigilance because there is a great treasure hidden in one of them." But before the boys could ask in which particular farm the treasure was hidden, the farmer closed his eyes forever. The sons, after their father's death, picked their spades and mattocks up, and started digging over their inherited farms. They dug up every possible potion of the land but found no treasure. But the farms did repay their labour with superabundant crops. The boys at last comprehended what treasure their father meant.

318 The Old Woman & the Doctor



An old woman lived in her bungalow with her maid. Her husband had died and her only son was living away with his new family. She was alone. Owing to her increasing age, she was losing her eyesight. Lately, she had also begun to feel a sort of intolerable soreness in both of her eyes. She loved her eyes very much. For her, her eyes made her see the beautiful world God had created. If her eyes also left her, she would be even lonelier. Hence, she sent her maid to a nearby hospital to bring the eye doctor to her. The maid returned home with the doctor. He inquired the woman about her problem: "How may I help your eyes, Madam?" The woman replied, "Doctor, my eyes are very sore for last few days. I have stopped seeing clearly. Now, everything looks hazy around me." The doctor said, "Don't worry, I will cure your blindness, and you will regain your healthy vision." The woman laid a condition before the doctor that until she was completely cured, she would not pay him. The doctor agreed but he was an unprincipled man. Every time he visited the woman for her treatment, he stole one costly article from her house. By the time, the woman had her vision back, her house was almost empty. The distraught woman said to the doctor, "What have you done to my eyes, Doctor? They are worse than before because now I can't even see my household articles. Go away, there is no payment for you?" But the doctor had already got more than what was entitled to him.

319 The Gourd Tree & the Palm Tree



There was a Palm Tree. She was 20 inches tall. Her trunk was slender. Though she had no branches, yet her beauty was no less. Her leaves were evergreen. They drooped densely all around from the top point of the trunk, as the water falls from a fountain. They were long and feather-like. Palm Tree noticed that next to her was growing a Gourd Tree at a very high speed. Soon, she grew up to the height of Palm. Palm had been seeing her when she was just a seedling; after all, Gourd had been sown before her eyes. Gourd, swaggering at her newly acquired youth, asked Palm, "Oh, so nice to see you! You look as tall as me. When did you come here?" Palm answered, "I came here hundred years ago." "What! A hundred years ago! You mean to say that you are hundred years old?" said Gourd, in surprise. "Yes; I am hundred years old, Child." Gourd didn't like Palm calling her a child. "You are calling me a child? I am as tall as you are. I am equal to you." Palm said, "No, you are not equal to me." Gourd talked back, "Yes, I am. And not only as tall but better too. You have taken a hundred years to reach this height, while I have taken only a few." Palm explained to the goofy Gourd, "Slow and steady growth leads to a strong stature. In all these years, I have gained so much maturity that I can endure any mood of Time. My roots are so intensely interwoven with the Earth, that no one can remove me from my place. But your rise is swift. And that what comes swift goes swift too."

320 The Bird-Catcher, the Partridge & the Cock

Once, a guest arrived unexpectedly at the door of a Bird catcher. The Bird catcher decided to kill his pet partridge and serve it in dinner to his visitor. Seeing the danger looming over his head the partridge pleaded for mercy saying, "What would you do without me when next you spread your net? Who would chirp you to sleep, or call for you the covey of answering birds?' The Bird catcher spared his life. Then he headed towards his coop and caught the red Cock by his neck to slaughter him forthwith. The terrified Cock let out a pitiful sound saying, "If you kill me, who will announce to you the appearance of the dawn? The Bird catcher replied, "What you say is true my friend. But, we are to have our dinner tonight too."

321 The brave Boy

Two brothers, Jack and Dennis, everyday, went to a nearby park to play with their friends. One of the boys who also came daily in the park, Alan, was a bully. When he learnt that Jack was scared of heights, he started troubling Jack. One day, he asked Jack to try and climb a tree. "Don't worry, Jack. You won't fall. I am there to help you," said Alan. After Jack had climbed up a few branches, Alan suddenly left him and ran away. Jack shouted for help. Then a girl called Jane and her friend Tabitha helped Jack come down. Another day, the children decided to climb to the top of Tabitha's house to play. Suddenly, it began to rain with thunders. Everyone quickly came down the ladder one by one. Jack was the last. Alan pushed away the ladder before Jack could step on it. As Jack was looking about in bafflement, he heard something crashing behind him. Turning round, he saw that the roof next door had crashed. He heard some children screaming. The spirit of saving the children overcame Jack's fear of heights. He stepped onto the edge and went to the parapet of the house. He leaped down and rapidly began to move away the bricks. He managed to pull out a little child. There was a roar of cheers from the onlooking crowd. The child was taken to its mother. By now, the emergency team had also arrived. They took over and the other two children were also saved. Alan, who had watched all, turned to Jack and apologised to him at his conduct. Just then, Jack's parents and Dennis rushed up to him. They were glad to see he was safe. "Mamma, I'm not afraid of heights any more," said Jack. His mother hugged him and they all went home.

322 When Words don't work, Blows do the Job

Some cranes made a newly-sown plowland their feeding ground. For a long time, the farmer of the plowland chased the cranes away by hurling an empty sling at them. The cranes would run away in the terror he inspired but would come back again the next day. When many days passed like this, the cranes realized that the farmer only swung the sling in air and never used it supposedly. Soon, the cranes ceased to take any notice of the farmer and his sling and would not move. The farmer saw that his empty sling had stopped affecting the cranes, so he finally charged his sling with stones and killed a great number of the cranes. The remaining cranes at once forsook his field crying to each other, "It is time for us to find a new feeding ground, for this man has learnt to use his sling."

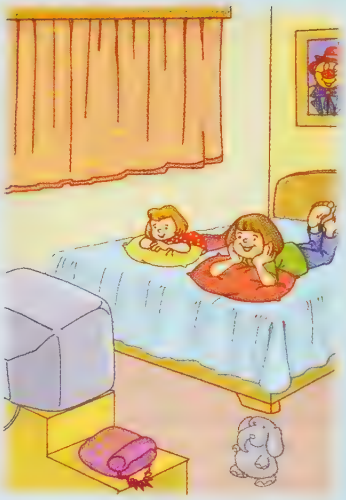
323 The Man & the three Thugs

Long ago, there lived a man named Shyam. One day, Shyam visited the cattle fair and bought a stout goat. He slung the goat over his shoulder and returned to his home. Three thugs saw Shyam with the goat, they conspired to steal the animal and took hiding positions on the path of Shyam. When Shyam walked past them, the first thug came up to him and quizzed Shyam about the dog slung at his back. Shyam was shocked to hear these and called him a fool. The thug apologised and went away. Shyam hardly walked a hundred yards when another appeared and queried him on the dead calf on his shoulders. To this Shyam got furious and called him blind. At last, in the similar fashion, the third thug came to him and confronted him laughing. "Sir, why do you carry a donkey on your shoulders? It makes you a laughing stock", said the thug. Now Shyam was really worried, as three men had approached him with weird theories. He thought that the goat might certainly be some sort of a ghost. Shyam got so terrified on the account of this event, that he flung the goat onto the roadside and fled. The thugs caught the goat and feasted on it happily.

324 The Thief & the Saint

Once there lived a Saint in a village. Many people visited him for his precious advices. They also presented valuables to him. After some time, the Saint became very rich. The wealth he had amassed became a great source of worry for him. He always kept the money bag under his armpit and never parted with it. A thief, whose named Moti was tipped off about the Saint's possession. Moti planned to steal the money and turned into his disciple. Gradually, Moti tried to win his master's confidence, by carrying his duties diligently. But the Saint didn't seem to fully trust Moti. One day, the Saint was invited to a nearby village to perform ceremony of sacred thread in one of his disciple's house. Moti accompanied the Saint. On the way, they came across a river. There the Saint folded his money bag in his robe and asked his disciple to keep an eye on the bag. When the Saint returned having finished his holy bath, Moti was nowhere to be found. Only his robe was lying on the ground. He quickly checked for the money bag, but it was missing. He began to cry, "I've been robbed". He swooned and fell onto the ground.

325 Cathy & her Friend



Two-year-old Cathy and seven-year old Mary were very good friends. Cathy lived with her grandmother. When Mary went to school, Cathy played at home. In the evening, Tina, Mary's older sister, took them to the park. Cathy and Mary loved going to the park. One day, Cathy met a stranger in Mary's house. His name was Sam. He was a very tall boy. He smiled at Cathy with his big teeth. But Cathy didn't smile back. She was scared of Sam. When Sam tried to make friends with Cathy, she began to scream and wanted to go home. That evening Cathy did not to go with Mary to the park. Mary was very upset. "Cathy, come to the park with me. I want to play with you," she said."No, no!" said Cathy. The next day Tina told Cathy that Sam had gone away. But Cathy did not believe her. Cathy's grandmother took her to Mary's house. Mary was thrilled to see Cathy. Cathy looked into each room carefully to check that Sam had really gone. Then she laughed and hugged Mary.

326 The Picnic

Mickey and Tina were glad. They were going to a picnic from their school. "Good morning, Teacher," greeted Mickey and Tina. "Tina, will you please get all the children in line?" asked the teacher. The kids got into line. "All are here? Then, let's go!" said the teacher. So they all got into the bus. Soon they were at the picnic spot. Everyone got off with their bag-packs. "Play the way you want, children, but please don't go far from my sight," the teacher advised the excited kids. After playing for a long time, the kids were tired. "Let's all sit in a circle and share what each one of us has brought to eat," suggested the teacher. All sat in a circle and opened out their snacks. There came out a vast variety of delicious food items. Sharing, everyone enjoyed and ate their fill. The teacher told many interesting stories to the kids. The kids also chatted with their teacher and shared jokes. Their laughter filled the air. The kids then resumed playing and now it was time to go back. The teacher made all the kids get into the bus in line. "Did you have a good time at the picnic,

children?" asked the teacher. "Yes!" Tina had fallen asleep in the lap of her brother. "Wake up, Tina," said Mickey. "Look, there's Mother standing." Mickey and Tina thanked their teacher for the picnic and alighted from the bus.

327 A Christmas Party

It was Christmas day—Lance and Laura's favourite day! Lance looked at the tree. "I like Christmas tree, Laura." "Me too," Laura said as she looked at the tree with her brother. Laura more liked the little Santa Clauses on the tree, whereas it was the coloured lights which pleased Lance. "They shine so brightly," said he. They both liked the hats and sticks also on the tree. There were lying some beautifully wrapped gifts under the tree. "Mother, may we look into the gifts, please?" "All right, you curious kids," replied Mother. Lance and Laura feverishly opened the gifts of their names. Laura got a doll! She liked the doll. "Will you come and play with my doll?" Laura asked Lance. "Nah, I'd rather play with this ball!" said Lance. "I like it." Lance threw the ball up. "Here, Laura, catch!" "No, thanks," twitched Laura. Lance and Laura thanked their mother for their lovely Christmas gifts. "Thank your father. He has bought them for you," said Mother. "Mother, shall we have a party?" the children asked. "Of course we will!" said Mother. "Yeeeee, I like to have party!" danced Laura. After the Christmas mass, it was time for the party. "Here comes the Christmas cake!" Mother said presenting the cake to the guests at her home. "Look at the Christmas cake, Brother, wow!" exclaimed Laura. "Who will cut the cake?" asked Mother. "Come, Laura, you cut. You are the smallest here." "No, Father will cut. He is the eldest," said Laura. "Let Lance cut," suggested Father. "No, Mother, you cut the cake, please. After all, you have made it," requested Lance. "Yes, Melina, you cut the cake," roared all the guests. So Mother cut the cake. "Come, guys, and attack the cake!" said she. Little Polly ran to grab the first slice. "No, I will have it first because it's my cake!" hindered Laura. "Laura, Christmas means giving and sharing. Christmas cake is neither yours nor anybody else's, but for that each one who wants to have it on Christmas. Now you will feed Polly cake with your own hand," chided Father. Laura was an obedient girl. She said sorry to Polly and put a slice in her mouth. Then, all sang cheery Christmas carols. The party kept on until 12 o'clock.

328 Playtime!!

It was raining. Therefore, Rocky and Rochelle could not go out to play. "Come, Sister, I read you a story from my story book," Rocky made Rochelle sit close by him. "Who is this?" asked she. "This is Cinderella," replied Rocky. "... She went to a ball and lost her glass slipper..." After some time, it stopped raining. Rocky and Rochelle went out to Fun Park. There, Rochelle went to Fairyland and Rocky to Picnic Park. At Fairyland, Rochelle met a girl dressed up as Cinderella. "Hello, I'm Rochelle. What's your name?" asked Rochelle. "Did you lose it at the ball?" "Perhaps," said Cinderella. Cinderella then took Rochelle all around Fairyland. "Where are we?" asked she. "Look at the toys here. Do you like them?" asked Cinderella. "Hey, here is a drum!" exclaimed Rochelle. "Shall I play it now? Here I go Boom! Boom!" "Can you hear the train go chug, chug, Rochelle?" asked Cinderella. "Yes, I can," replied Rochelle. She saw a pipe in Toyland. "What a lovely pipe! Will you teach me how to play pipe?" Rochelle requested Cinderella. "Sure!" Cinderella showed Rochelle how to play a pipe. Next, they went to Picnic Park. There, a man was playing a pipe. "See that man playing the pipe and all those children trailing behind him to the tune," Cinderella showed Rochelle. "Rocky, Brother, wait up! I want to come too," said Rochelle. "Pied Piper, may I come too?" asked she. "Yes, pretty girl," said the Pied Piper. "Rocky has learnt to play the pipe. So have I," said Rochelle. And Rocky, Rochelle and Cinderella had a wonderful playtime.

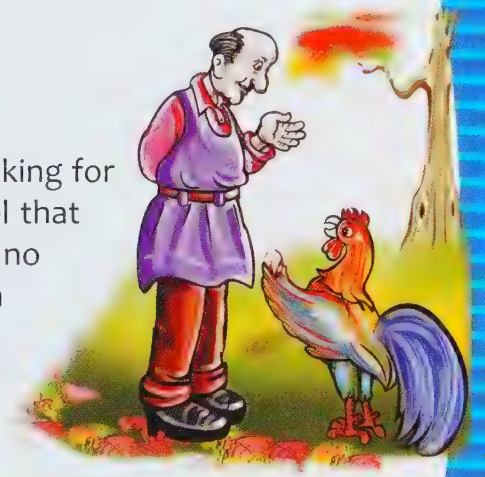
329 The Buffoon & the Countryman

Once, a Buffoon was catering laughter to his audiences. The spectators were amused with his multiple imitations of animal cries. Finally, he finished off squeaking like a pig. Plaudits flew across for the Buffoon. A Countryman who was amongst the audience, challenged that he can imitate similar squeals. A competition was called the next day. On the given day, the Countryman appeared on the stage and putting his head down squealed hideously. The deafening sound angered the crowd. They hissed and hurled stones at him. The Countryman pulled out a little pig and cried "You fool! See what you have been hissing at." Men often applaud an imitation and hiss the real thing.

330 Androcles & The Lion

Androcles was a Roman slave. He was made to work day and night and ill-treated. Androcles decided to run away. He escaped in to the open country at night and went on walking with no sense of direction. He was hungry and tired and fell asleep in a cave. He was suddenly woken up by a loud roar and to his horror saw a huge lion sitting at the mouth of the cave. But the lion did not attack – it just sat moaning and holding up his paw. Androcles went near the lion and saw a large thorn stuck under its paw. He quickly pulled it out much to the lion's relief. After that Androcles resumed his journey. But he had not gone far when he was captured by Roman soldiers and taken back to his master. Runaway slaves used to be thrown to starving wild beasts. One such day, Androcles found himself in the middle of the arena facing a lion. But then, there was a hush. The lion had stopped short and did not attack. Instead it lay at the slave's feet, licking him. It took Androcles a few moments to realize that it was the same lion he had encountered in the jungle. He told his story to the Emperor who was so amazed that he made him a free man.

331 The Farmer & the Cock



There once lived a cock who loved to scratch about in the grass, looking for tidbits to eat. It so happened that one day, he scratched up a jewel that was so beautiful that it shone brightly in the sunlight. But it was of no use to him. So he took it to a farmer and got some golden grains in exchange.

332 The Brother & the Sister

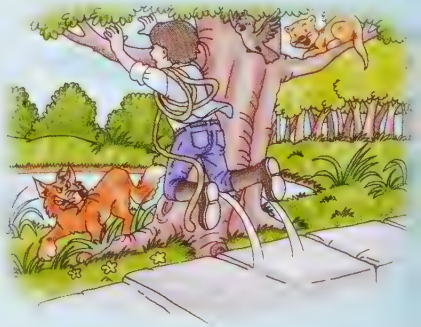
There were a brother and a sister. Where the brother possessed remarkable good looks, the sister was unbelievably ugly. One day, while they were playing, they happened to look together into a mirror placed on their mother's chair. The brother congratulated himself on his good looks but the sister felt insulted, deeply hurt and enraged. She could not bear to look at her ugliness and to hear the self-praising of her brother, so she ran to their father and complained of her brother's meanness. The father called the brother and embraced

both bestowing his kisses and affection impartially on each. He then said, "My only wish is that you both look into the mirror together every day: Promise me, my son, that you will never misuse your beauty and you, my dear daughter, that for your lack of beauty you will make up with virtues."

333 Laziness blocks Success

Neville was idling under a tree on his field which was coated with bushes. His farmer friend passed by on his cart loaded with wheat and stopped on seeing Neville. A bit jealous with his large produce, Neville greeted him coldly. His friend said, "Had you dug up as much ground as your lazy body occupies lying in the shade, you could have wheat even twice than mine." The friend's remark woke the laborious person in Neville. He began to dig out the bushes and to sow the seeds simultaneously as he turned over the ground. In less than a year, crops were swaying there. On harvest, Neville went to his farmer friend and said, "You were right. My produce is double of yours. I just had to work hard. Thank you. Please accept this gift as my gratitude to your advice."

334 Peter & the Wolf



Peter's grandpa had restricted him to step out of their house's boundary wall because a big, grey, and always hungry wolf lived in the forest near which their house was. But one morning, a melodious lark called Peter out and asked why didn't he come out and enjoy the lovely day. The day was indeed lovely. Peter, this time, couldn't help disobeying his grandpa who was asleep then. And he sneaked out of the boundary wall!! As he stood under the tree the lark was perched in, a brown cat rushed from behind towards the tree. "Today, you will be in my mouth, Lark." Peter warned the lark and she flew to the top of the tree. The cat purred at Peter. Suddenly, a duck from a pond shouted, "Help! Help!" The wolf was out! He swallowed the duck in a single gulp. The frightened Peter ran into his house. The wolf now stepped towards the cat and the lark. Peter, with a rope in his hand, climbed the boundary wall and jumped onto the tree. He ordered the lark to divert the wolf's attention. She began circling over the wolf's head, escaping his every snap. Peter quickly made a loop of one end of the rope and tied the other to the trunk. The cat speedily slipped the loop around the wolf's tail. Peter pulled it tight and jumped down the tree hanging the wolf up in the air.

Luckily, some hunters arrived just then and captured the wolf to take to the zoo. They heard some quacking from inside his stomach. One of them slapped the back of the wolf hard and out popped the duck! Peter, the lark, the cat, and the duck cheered together which woke Grandpa. When he came to know of the whole episode, he was very proud of his grandson.

335 The Hurricane

It was a pleasant day and Fareed was on a hunt of juicy strawberries in the woods. Suddenly, dark clouds shrouded the blue sky and it began to pour down heavily with thunder and lightning. Poor Fareed was trembling with fear and sought shelter in the hollow of an old tree trunk, not realising that lightning strikes tall trees first. Just then, he heard someone calling, "Fareed, Fareed! Come here and do come quickly! Instantly, Fareed hurried out from his hideout. Barely, had he covered a few distance that the lightning knocked the tree with an enormous thud. Fareed stood still for a couple of moment. He was certain that God has saved him from the doom. He saw a lady in white standing a few feet away to him. Fareed quickly ran up to her and asked why she was calling his name. The lady gave him a surprised look and said that she actually called her son 'Frank' who had gone to the stream to feed the goats. Fareed couldn't believe his ears and briefed the lady with his experience. Hearing this, the lady stood speechless. Then both she and Fareed thanked God at his gratefulness and mercy.

336 The Echo of Love

One day, young Girish was wandering in the woods. All alone, he began to playfully call out "Oh! Oh!!" Immediately another voice replied him back as "Oh! Oh!!" Little Girish, was highly surprised to hear this. He sought to find the person who was imitating him. Curiously he asked, "Who are you?" Instead of answering him, the voice queried back "Who are you?" Now Girish was fuming, he searched and searched but couldn't trace his imitator. He also called him an egghead. Disappointed, Girish returned home and narrated the account to his mother. His mother, an understanding lady, gave him a warm smile and affectionately took him on her lap. She explained to Girish that the voice he had encountered in the woods is the echo of his own sound. Had he called out in a gentle manner, Girish would have heard the same beautiful words coming back. It is also applicable in real life. If one is kind, caring and helpful towards others, they too will receive the same affection from others.

337 The Horse & his Rider

A cavalryman was greatly dependant on his charger. On him, he was doing pretty well in the war fights. As long as the war lasted, he looked upon him as his only helper in all emergencies. He was careful about his diet. He fed him with fresh hay and corn. But when the war was over, he only gave him chaff to eat and made him carry heavy loads, subjecting him to much slavish drudgery and ill-treatment. War was once again announced. When the trumpet summoned his cavalry, the cavalryman put military trappings on his charger and mounted him wearing his war-suit. But the horse fell down straightway under the weight of his master's extremely heavy war-suit because his own trappings were not less heavy either. The horse said to his master, "You must now go to the war on foot, for you have transformed me from a Horse into a Donkey. And how can you expect that I will awhile turn from a Donkey to a Horse again for you?"

338 The Hunter & the Horseman

A hunter snared a hare, placed it upon his shoulder, and set out homewards. On his way, he met a man on a horseback who said to him, "Would you give your hare to me? I will purchase it." When the hunter gave the horseman the hare and waited for him to take out money from his pocket, the horseman rode off as fast as he could. The hunter ran after him, as if he would catch him. The faster he ran, the faster the horseman rode, and the more distance grew. When the hunter was sure that he could catch the horseman, he called out to him to relieve his chagrin, "All right! Keep it as my present to you! Enjoy!!

339 The Charcoal-Burner & the Fuller

A charcoal-burner conducted his trade from his house only. One day, he said to a friend of his who was a fuller, "My house is nicely spacious for two. Why don't you come and live with me? Apart from having a companion, we both will be able to lessen our housekeeping expenses as well. The friend replied, "Your thought is indeed beautiful but this arrangement is impossible, friend, because my job is of whitening while yours is of blackening. Whatever I will bleach, you will stain that with your charcoal."

340 The Hunter & the Woodman

A hunter – who was not very bold, though he thought so – was searching for the tracks of a lion. He asked a man, who was felling oak trees in the forest, if he had seen any imprints of a lion's footsteps or knew where his lair was. "Why the imprints or the lair, Sir?" said the man. "I will show you the lion himself." The hunter instantly turned pale and his teeth began to chatter with dread. He then replied, "No, thank you. I did not ask that. It is his track only I am searching of, not he himself." The man resumed his tree-felling giving a mocking smile to the hunter.

341 The Huntsman & the Fisherman

A huntsman was returning with his hounds and chanced to meet a fisherman who was coming from the other end of the road with his basket full of fresh-water fish. The huntsman craved to have the fish of the fisherman, while the fisherman equally desired the game-bag of the huntsman. With each other's consent, they both exchanged the produce of their day's sport. Each was glad with his bargain. For some time, they made this exchange daily. Finally, a common neighbour said to them, "If you keep doing it so frequently, you will soon destroy the pleasure of your exchange. And then each of you will again wish to retain the produce of his own sport, and this would create distances. Don't be like that guest who loses his value because of frequent visits."

342 The Herdsman & his lost Bull-Calf

A herdsman was tending his flock in a forest and lost a bull-calf from the fold. After a long and futile search, he made a vow- "If I could only discover who has taken my bull-calf, I will sacrifice a lamb to Hermes, Pan, and the Guardian Deities of the forest. Short afterwards, as he ascended the small hillock, he saw at its foot a lion feeding on the bull-calf. Stunned at the sight, he lifted his eyes and hands up to the heaven and said, "I just now vowed to you all that I would offer a lamb if the bull-calf thief is revealed to me. As I had prayed, I have discovered who the culprit is. Not only a lamb but I add a stout bull also to my offering, provided— you arrange my safe escape from that beast."

343 The Farmer & the Stork

A farmer had newly sown a plowland. He was very eagerly waiting to see the green seedlings cover the ground. But before it was possible, he one day found that a flock of Cranes flew down to the plowland and started pecking on the seeds. The farmer was very angry. He immediately brought a large net and threw over all the Cranes. They were now caught by him. With them, there was also a Stork that had fractured its leg in the net. The Stork beseeched the farmer, "Master, please let me go. Look at my leg, it is broken. Of what delight would be a crippled bird to you? Moreover, I am not even a Crane. You may check my feathers. Master, it is known the world over that I am a bird of great character: I serve my mother and father, and cling to only one partner all my life. And why will I eat seeds? I love eating fish only! My coming here is all by mistake. Now, please Master; Kindly set me free." But the farmer was not moved at all by the emotional story of the Stork. He instead laughed out loud and said to it, "Perhaps, whatever you have said is true. But I believe what I see. And I have seen you robbing on my land with these Cranes. So you too must suffer." After answering to the Stork, the farmer took the trapped robbers by the net and set off to his home.

344 The Travellers & the Plane Tree

Brad and Tom were travelling to a far off place. It was summer time, and they were outdoors in extreme heat and humidity. As they walked, they sweat a lot which made them tired. They both decided to settle down beneath the Plane Tree for a while. They lay down under the Plane Tree. As few moments passed, Tom and Brad felt a bit relieved in the soothing shade. Tom was gazing up at the tree and its features. He then spoke to Brad, "Don't you find this tree useless. I mean it has got no fruits that we may eat, or any flower that we may admire. Its wood also doesn't seem to be of any use." The Plane Tree rustled its leaves out of anger and started speaking: "Don't be so ungrateful, O Man. Have you forgotten why you are lying under me? If it was not for me, you would have been roasted in the sunlight. And then, I am sure you would not have been able to enjoy any fruit or flower. Never forget that God has created everything with a purpose – including YOU! Tom and Brad ran off on hearing the Plane Tree talk!

345 The Strawberries

Once, a war veteran fell very ill, when he was returning home. Having no alternative, he took shelter in a barn. Now, little Aarati, the daughter of a poor basket-maker came to know about the poor soldier. She felt sorry and began to take care of him. On her every visit, Aarati gave him some money. One day, the soldier got curious and asked the little girl, "My dear child, I know that your parents are very poor. Will you tell me how you have so much money to spare?" "Well, Sir, every morning, on my way to the match factory, I come across a lot of strawberries in the woods. I collect a basketful of those berries and sell them," replied Aarati. The soldier's eyes welled with tears. He blessed Aarati for her kindheartedness and promised her to send school and spare the fees.

346 The bald Knight

There was a knight whose increasing age could not diminish his courage, but his hair had to succumb to. He was now all bald. So he, to save from embarrassment, bought himself a nice wig. He thought of trying it in public for the first time. He went for an outing with his peers. All of a sudden, a puff of wind came and blew off the knight's wig. At the sight, the roaring laughter of the peers resounded the air. Instead of showing embarrassed, the knight also joined in saying, "How silly I was! How could I hope that this false hair would stay when even my real hair didn't?" His amused peers hugged him for his spirit of laughing at himself.

347 The Boundary Stone

Gary had a large orchard which bordered his neighbour's field. But Gary was a greedy and dishonest man. He wanted to expand his orchard more but at his neighbour's expense. At night, he shifted the boundary stone of the orchard further in the neighbour's field. Next day, he took a ladder to climb a tree for its fruit. But he lost balance and fell right upon the boundary stone. His neck was broken. At Gary's scream, his neighbour came out running and noticed that Gary had wrongfully moved the boundary stone into his property. Supporting Gary to get up, the neighbour said to him, "Had you not done this treachery, you would have fallen on the grassy bed instead of stone."

348 Kindness always pays

Sheila was a poor and lonely widow. She never began her day without saying morning prayers. She worked at a spin-wheel from home to earn her living. One day, she happened to read a prayer somewhere that inspired her to help others. "How will a destitute woman like me help anyone?" deplored Sheila. But then, she suddenly remembered her friend Mina who was also a widow, poor, lonely, and on her sickbed. Sheila thought that if she spun wheel at Mina's house, she would able to work and look after Mina, both. So she visited her ailing friend. Mina was all tearful in joy. She proposed to Sheila, "We both are widows and lonely. I have recently received a fine share of my ancestral property. Why don't you live with me? With whatever you earn from spinning, including my own little fortune, we both can live happily. Moreover, I will also get a companion to nurse me." Sheila readily agreed. With her love and care, Mina recovered completely. The two friends then lived a happy, progressive life together.

349 That Rain was a Blessing

Greene was returning home ahorseback with a lot of money. The route was long and passed through a forest. The moment his horse trotted in the forest, heavy rain started. He grumbled to God, "You found only this hour to send rain? People are right you are very unkind." A little further in the forest, a dacoit stopped Greene with his gun. His index finger was on the trigger. The dacoit finally pulled the trigger but nothing happened. The frightened Greene was quick to understand that the rain water had damped the gunpowder. He at once drove his horse the fastest and was soon out of the dacoit's range. Having reached home safe, he knelt down and thanked God, "Had you not sent the rain, that gun would have shot me dead and all my money would have been gone. Forgive me for my imprudence. Now I too believe that whatever You do is always right."

350 The Crimson Candle

A man was at his deathbed. He called his wife to his bedside and said, "Our holy religion says that a married man will get admission into Heaven only then when he has never been made impure in his life by a wrong woman. I need one last proof of your love and fidelity for me before I leave you forever. Go to that desk. There's a crimson candle in

its drawer. Bring it to me." The wife brought it. "It is not an ordinary candle. It has been blessed by a spiritual and has mystical powers. Hold it in your hands and promise me that you will not remarry till it exists." The wife promised. At the man's funeral, the wife stood at the head of the coffin and lighted the crimson candle. She didn't put it out but waited for it to melt away.

351 Peas for Peas

A juggler went to a prince. He expressed his wish that he wanted to perform an amazing feat in his court which no one else could do. The prince permitted. On the appointed day, the juggler arrived with his assistant. Bowing to the prince he began his feat. He asked his assistant to hold a needle pointed towards him. He then started aiming peas at the needle one at a time. Never for once, did a single pea missed to be pierced by the needle. The prince applauded the act a lot. He whispered something into his secretary's ear and sent him out to bring the juggler's reward. The secretary returned with a heavy sac. The juggler was rejoicing in heart thinking the sac to be filled with gold. As the sac was opened, it was indeed filled but with peas!! To justify his decision, the prince said, "Your mastery can't serve my subjects in any way. Take all these peas with you so that you are never short of it for your useless skill."

352 The Rain & the Sun

It was monsoon. Ronan and Sharmell were waiting for the rain to stop so that they could go out and play with their friends. Their mother, who was working in the kitchen, heard when Ronan said loudly, "Wish that sun shines forever!" What luck! The wish was instantly granted as the rain stopped and the sun came out shining. The children rushed out to play. Several months passed but the sun was still shining and there was no sign of rain. Soon, the nature started to wither. Ronan and Evelyn noticed that without rain and constant sunshine, trees, plants, crops, and even people were suffering. Their surroundings now looked dull and lifeless to them. They went to their mother and asked, "When will rain come?" The mother replied, "Why, you yourself had wished the rain to go forever and the sun to shine always. Now you understand why rain is as important as sun? Without sun, the earth will be cold and damp and without rains, it will thirst to death. Learn to receive sorrows from God as thankfully as you receive joys from Him. This is the key to happiness."

353 The golden Pears

Priya and her three siblings are very excited to visit Granpa's place. There, Granpa was delighted to see the four grandchildren. Granpa bought four ripe golden looking pears and offered them to the children. Then Granpa decided to test their analytical skills. He called them and said; "Now children, I have four pears with me. You have to distribute it amongst five people without using fraction. Can you solve the problem?" The kids began to scratch their heads. Then the eldest of all, Priya, took a pear in her hand and said, "One pear and two sisters would make three; one pear and my two brothers also make three; and these two pears and one mother again make three. See! It is equivalent in all the three cases. Don't you think so?" "Yes!!" chorused the sibling. Granpa was very happy with the reply and handed a box full of sweets to Priya for her intelligence.

354 The Carpenter & the Image of Mercury

Once upon a time, there was a very poor carpenter. He was the believer of Mercury- the Roman god of merchantry. He had a wooden image of Mercury to which he made offerings everyday. He would constantly pray the idol to make him rich. But in spite of his sheer devotion, he became poorer and poorer and poorer. At last, he lost his patience and in extreme anger, he took the idol off its pedestal and dashed it against the wall. When its head was knocked off, a stream of gold flowed out of it. The amazed carpenter quickly gathered up all gold. He then picked up the idol and said to it, "I think you are completely contradictory. You do what your devotees don't want, for when I paid you honour, I reaped no benefits. But now when I maltreated you, I have an abundant harvest of riches."

355 The Frog of Calaveras County

Jim Smiley loved to bet. He had a frog, named Dan'l Webster, whom he trained to jump higher than any other frog. Dan'l had won him money many a time before. One day, a stranger came over and challenged that Dan'l could not jump higher than any other frog. In no time, a bet of $40 was on. While Jim wasn't looking, the stranger secretly filled Dan'l with a quail shot so that he could not move, let alone jump. And Jim was $40 poorer.

356 The green Branch

Simon was a light-headed lad. His favorite spot in the entire household was in the backyard where he and his sister Sonia, had an individual corner each. While Sonia's plot was blooming with flowers, Simon's looked quiet bare and untidy. "O Simon! said Sonia, "Just look at your corner! It is so dirty. Why don't you take care of it the way I do? Otherwise, what mother says will come true!" "Mother says that you will never get about the bottom rung of the ladder," continued Sonia. Simon simply brushed aside her words. Then he scrambled up the mango tree till he reached the highest branch and said to his sister, "So tell me! Do you think I can never get about the bottom rung of the ladder?" Just then the branch of the tree made a cracking sound and broke off. Simon fell into the ground with a loud thud and had fractured his arm. From that day, Simon started taking his things seriously.

357 The precious Grass

It was summer time. Swati and Geeta were out to the city for their monthly shopping. Each of the two carried a large basket back once their exercise was over. Swati was complaining throughout their journey on the load that they had to carry, whereas Geeta was found in a happy and cheerful mood. This annoyed Swati and she snapped at Geeta, saying "What makes you so happy? I don't think that your bag is less in heaviness than mine, neither you are stronger than me." Geeta calmly replied that Swati was true, but she had quietly sprinkled a magic grass in her load to lighten the weight. Swati was extremely curious to hear this and asked Geeta to share some with her too. "O well! I certainly will." replied Geeta. "The precious grass that lightens my loads is 'patience'. Remember Swati, patience is the only solution for all worries and trails."

358 The Flea & the Man

A flea had made a man highly annoyed with its constant jumping from here to there – rummaging for the site on his body with the sweetest blood. The tormented man at last caught the flea and asked, "Who are you that dares to feed on my limbs and cause me so much trouble in catching you?" The Flea replied, "O my very dear sir, kindly spare my life, and don't destroy me. Look at me. I am not even bigger than your respected nail. Think how

much harm can I do to you, possibly?" The man laughed at the pleas made by the flea from between his two first fingers. He said, "An evil is an evil, no matter big or small. It is not to be tolerated. You have done this gross mistake of seeking my blood, so you must suffer at my own hands."

359 The Farmer & the Fox

A fox had robbed the poultry farm of a farmer. He was seething in anger now and wanted to avenge on the fox. At last, the unlucky fox came into the clutches of the farmer. The fox struggled a lot to flee but failed. The angry farmer, determined to take revenge, soaked a rope well in oil and tied it to the tail of the fox. Then, he set the rope on fire. The fox yelped madly to see the consumptive fire flaring towards him. He got panicky and ran into a field. Farmer's bad luck! The field was owned by the farmer himself and was his only source of income left now. To the worse, it was also the time of harvest. The burning rope tied to the fox's tail set every stem of the crop on fire it came upon. The whole field thus, got reduced to a black mass. The poor farmer reaped nothing that year.

360 The two Pots

Two pots floated down the river. One was of brass and the other of clay. The clay pot kept away from the brass pot. "Fear nothing," said the brass pot. "I'll do you no harm." "No, no," said the clay pot, "you may not harm me purposely. But if we should happen to knock into each other by chance, I'll be ruined. You and I can never do well together."

361 From the Frying Pan into the Fire

One day, five fish were caught from their pond and put in a water-filled pan. The catcher placed the pan on the fire to boil and moved away to prepare the remaining ingredients. Meanwhile,

the fish in the pan began to feel the killing heat. One fish said, "We must get out of here or else we all will be roasted and that cruel man will savour our flesh." The second fish asked, "But what can we do?" The first fish requested the second fish to jump out and bring some help. As the second fish jumped out of the pan, the poor thing fell on the burning coals over which the pan was and died. The fellow fish, gaping at the horrible fate of their friend, cursed the first fish: "Had you not given your bad advice, our friend would have seen a less ugly end. At least, we would have died together."

362 Beautiful might be harmful

It was Cathy's father's birthday. He was very fond of mushrooms. So her mother sent her to the woods to bring some mushrooms to make on her father's birthday. When Cathy returned, she presented her mushroom-full basket to the mother and said, "Look, Mum, I have brought red & purple mushrooms! Just look at the pearl-like dots on them! You always bring those brown, ugly mushrooms..." "O you silly child, these bright-coloured mushrooms are poisonous! They may look attractive but they can't be eaten. Those brown mushrooms may look ugly but they are the best of their kind," chided the mother. Cathy was very sorry. Her mother explained to her, "Sweetheart, the same is with life. Never be deceived by the appearance but trust only the character."

363 The Horse & his Groom

There lived a groom who used to spend his whole days in currycombing and rubbing down his horse; but at the same time, he would steal the oats given for the horse's meal and would sell them for his own profit. Fed up, the horse one day asked the groom, "There was a girl who ate almost nothing in fear of becoming fat and dressed herself in the best way. But after a while, she began to look weak, dull and gothic. She was wondering that though she ate less and did the best makeup, yet she could not look beautiful. Could you tell me why it was so?" "It is clear that if you don't eat properly, you can't have that natural glow, no matter what you do." "Exactly, said the horse, "if you want me also to be in good condition, you should groom me less and feed me more."

364 The big Fight

Jack, Ruby, Harry and Alan were close friends. They mostly played outdoors. They lived close to a jungle and often went there to play among the trees. One day, when they were playing hide-and-seek in the jungle, they heard a snake hissing. Then they saw a mongoose angrily moving towards the snake. Jack, however, found a long stick to poke them with and lead them to fight. Both Harry and Alan said, "Don't, Jack." But Jack did not listen to them. The mongoose was stronger. He caught the snake with his mouth and bit him. The fight went on for a while till the mongoose managed to kill the snake. But naughty Jack couldn't stay still for long. Though the mongoose was still alive, he picked up the long stick once more and tried to poke the mongoose with it. The mongoose made screeching sounds and ran towards Jack. The other children screamed in fear. But Jack ran and quickly climbed a tree nearby. The mongoose stood there for some time, staring at the tree, Jack and the stick. Then he ran away. Jack climbed down the tree and picked up the dead snake with the stick. Ruby screamed at him, "Jack, why are you doing this?" Jack did not listen to her. He began walking towards where they lived. When they reached home, Jack began shouting and calling out to the neighbours. The people were shocked to see the dead snake on the stick. Jack moved the stick around for all to see. Then he said, "I killed this snake. See how brave I am! Harry, Alan and Ruby are such cowards." His three friends could only stand there open-mouthed.

365 The Coppersmith & his Dog

A coppersmith had a little dog which was his master's favorite. The dog was his constant companion. But the coppersmith hated one thing about his dog that while he hammered away at his metals, the dog slept but when it was time of meals, the dog woke up and wagged his tail, asking for a share of his meal. So the coppersmith one day reproved his dog when he again broke his sleep to have his share from the meal. "You little sluggard! What do I do of you? When I work, you sleep on the mat and when I begin to eat after my toil, you wake up and wag your tail for food. Do you not know that none but those who labour deserve to eat? So if you want food, wake with me when I work or forget it."

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